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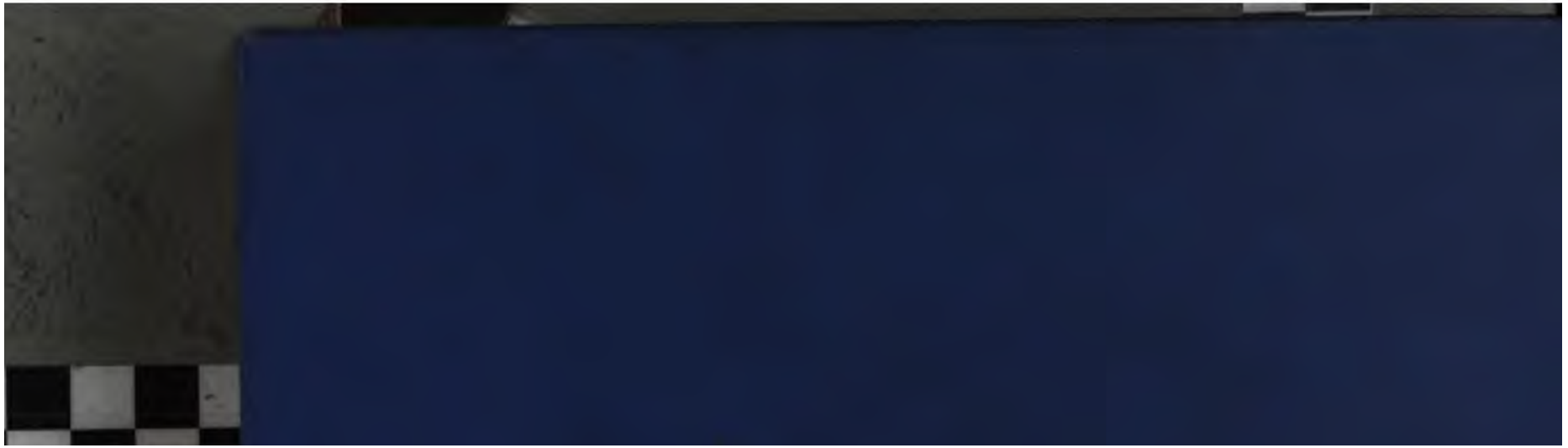

THE MIRACLES OF OUR LADY SAINT MARY

Our Lady St. Mary.

From a French Book of Hours in the British Museum

THE MIRACLES OF OUR LADY SAINT MARY

BROUGHT OUT OF DIVERS TONGUES AND NEWLY SET FORTH IN ENGLISH

By EVELYN UNDERHILL

NEW YORK: E. P. DUTTON & CO.
1906

To

B. A. C.

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INTRODUCTION

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Introduction

THIS book constitutes an attempt to re-introduce to English readers a cycle of old tales in which their ancestors took great delight—a by-way of mediæval literature which, from one cause or another, is now practically unknown except to professed students of folklore and hagiography. This cycle, the Miracles of Our Lady, or, to give it its terse and technical name, the Mary-legends, is formed by a large group of religio-romantic stories, linked together by no closer tie than the fact that the Virgin Mary supplies the supernatural element in each. Varying between the extremes of mysticism and melodrama, and belonging to many periods and places, from England to Egypt, from the fourth century to the fifteenth, they have yet contrived to assemble themselves together, and even to acquire a certain family likeness. Their number is astonishingly great: in the "Analecta Bollandiana" over four hundred are indexed. In such a mass of material there is much, of course, which is monotonous, unedifying, or otherwise unsuited to the general reader; but nearly all these legends, whether they be

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historical, allegorical, or—as is often the case—pious adaptations of secular folk-tales, are full of interest for the student of mediæval manners and Christian mythology.

Though now almost entirely forgotten, for over four centuries the Miracles of Our Lady occupied a very prominent place in popular literature. They are the fairy-tales of mediæval Catholicism; the result of the reaction of religion on that spirit which produced the romances of chivalry. These tales bring us to the Courts of Paradise, but the atmosphere is still that of the Courts of Love. By turns homely and heroic, visionary and realistic, they do in literature that which the Gothic sculptors do in art; make a link between heaven and earth, give actual and familiar significance to the most awful mysteries of faith, and set the Queen of Angels in the midst of her faithful friends.

As other fairy tales, behind their apparent if adorable absurdities, carry a secret message for those who can pierce the veil, so in these legends great mysteries are often concealed. It was in this form that those mysteries were able to come out from the cloister and spread themselves in the world; for it was amongst the people that the Mary-legends prospered, and to the people that they were primarily addressed. They adorned sermons, they provided subjects for poetry, painting and sculpture, they were a part of the texture of the common life.

In England, where devotion to Our Lady has always flourished, her miracles were well

known and greatly loved. They are sculptured in the arcading of the Lady Chapel at Ely Cathedral, and painted in the margins of Queen Mary's Psalter, and other masterpieces of the English illuminating schools. Unfortunately, however, few were written in the English language. The early collections, made for the use of preachers, or for the edification of those lords and ladies in whom the troubadours had roused a passion for romance, are always either in Latin, the language of religion, or in Norman-French, the language of the Court. These Latin and French MSS. still exist in great numbers in most of the great European libraries; sometimes alone, more often bound up with prayers, tracts, homilies, and miscellaneous religious tales. They begin to be common in the twelfth century, are most numerous in the thirteenth, and come to an end at the close of the fifteenth century, the doomsday of so many simple and delightful things. *Introduction*

The most complete collections of the Mary-legends were made in France. There, in the thirteenth century, the Dominican friar, Vincent of Beauvais, brought together in the seventh book of that dull but careful compilation, the "Speculum Historiale," all the most popular and best known of Saint Mary's miracles. There also in the same period Gautier de Coincy, a monk of the Abbey of Saint Medard at Soissons, wrote in rhymed couplets of an adorable naïveté his "Miracles de la Sainte Vierge." Whilst Vincent is a mere compiler, and does nothing

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to improve the generally terse and arid style of the originals from which he worked, Gautier is a poet, in love with his subject, which he adorns with innumerable fancies, quaint poetic details, rhapsodies and invocations full of fire. All lovers of old poetry should know his book. In him, I think, the Mary-legends found their finest expression. Neither his predecessor, the twelfth-century poet Adgar, with his barbaric Norman-French verse, nor his fifteenth-century follower, Jean Mielot, who wrote for Philip the Good, Duke of Burgundy, "Les Miracles de Nostre Dame," in pretty but insipid French prose, approach his level.

Here and there, however, amongst the more fragmentary Latin collections, we find a writer whose vivid style and sharp sense of detail places his work in the first rank. It is in such fragmentary collections that many of the best stories, omitted by the great compilers, are hid—in MS. sermons, histories of the religious orders, and those books of anecdotes which every mediæval library possessed. Here one often finds significant variants of the more widespread tales; additions and alterations made to suit the tastes of the individual or community for whom the MS. was written. Few modern editors would care to take the liberties which these mediæval scribes allowed themselves. Favours done to one monastic order are attributed to another; sometimes the venue of the miracle is changed, that it may be given a more local interest; details

and characters are added or eliminated at will. Thus it is that of all the chief Mary-legends endless variants exist; and also that in some cases one tale has become the mother of many others, which, all evidently springing from the same root, show strong family resemblances, and equally strong individual differences. There is, for instance, the so-called Mary-bridegroom group, in which the hero, betrothing himself to an image of the Virgin, is afterwards prevented by her from contracting an earthly marriage. This group is paralleled in folk-lore by the old tale of "The Ring given to Venus." Perhaps next in size and importance is the Rosary group, a family of beautiful legends centred in the idea that the *Aves* said by the faithful are turned to roses by Our Lady's grace. Other well-marked classes are the stories relating to the Virgin's Electuary, the Mantle of Mercy, and the Star of the Sea.

I have said that there are no Early English collections of Miracles of the Virgin. Except for one or two tales of this sort in the South English Legendary and Northumbrian Verse Homilies, England, until the time of the invention of printing, read her Mary-legends in Latin or French. But in A.D. 1483 Caxton published an English translation of the "Legenda Aurea," and with it those Miracles of the Virgin which are inserted in the homilies on the Purification, Annunciation, Assumption, and Nativity of Our Lady. These, however, are few in number; and, except for the

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very fine Candlemas story at the Purification, they are tersely and baldly told, comparing ill with his picturesque and vigorous legends of the saints. A little later, in A.D. 1514, his successor, Wynkyn de Worde, "enprynted in London in Flete strete at the sygne of the sonne," a tiny book of "Myracles of our Lady" —a first and last attempt to popularise a selection of the Mary-legends in the English tongue: but as his work is in black-letter, and no new edition has appeared since the sixteenth century, it has not, at the present day, a large public.

So much, then, for the forms in which the Miracles of the Virgin have come down to us. In subject, they vary between the crudest sensationalism and the heights of mystical devotion; and often enough both extremes are present in the same tale, as, for instance, in "The Dove that Returned" and "The Virgin's Bridegroom." Many are evidently local legends which afterwards obtained a wider celebrity, being concerned with miracles wrought by Our Lady at specific shrines and holy places. The great French pilgrimages of Laon, Soissons, Mont S. Michel, Chartres, and Roc Amadour, had each such a cycle of stories. From them come "The Minstrel of Roc Amadour" and "The Eyes of the Blind." Another group relates favours shown by Our Lady to the saints. These also, in the first instance, probably arose near the shrines of the saints whom they commemorate, and, spreading with their fame, became absorbed into the general cycle of Mary-legends, losing all con-

nection with their place of origin, sometimes even surviving in a vague and general form after the very names of their heroes were forgot. Thus we find compilers to whom the names of Saint Bon and the Blessed Walter of Birbech were quite unknown, relating their legends under the titles of "A certain Bishop to whom Our Lady gave a Vestment" and "A certain Knight that tarried to hear Mass." *Introduction*

I have included three stories of saints in this collection—"Saint Thomas of Canterbury," "Our Lady of the Tournament," and "The Heavenly Vesture." Saint Thomas, I hope, needs no introduction to English readers, though perhaps few have heard of the very practical and womanly service which Saint Mary rendered him in the choir of Pontigny church. Saint Bon, to whom she gave the Heavenly Vesture, was much venerated in the south of France in the Middle Ages. He was bishop of Clermont in Auvergne A.D. 689–699, and the vestment with which the Virgin rewarded his piety was preserved in the treasury of the Cathedral of Clermont as late as the twelfth century, when it was seen and handled by Herbert Losinga, Bishop of Norwich. This legend, based on the very ancient and long-forgotten tradition that none may enter a church in the night hours lest they disturb the angels at their prayers, must certainly have had an early origin, and probably arose soon after Saint Bon's death at the end of the seventh century. The Blessed Walter of Birbech, for whom Our Lady of the

Introduction Tournament rode in the lists, was a Cistercian monk, beatified but not canonised, who died in the Abbey of Himmerode in the Eifel, *circ.* 1222. In the same century his life and miracles were written at some length by another German Cistercian, Cæsarius, of the daughter house of Heisterbach, in his "Dialogus Miraculorum."

Perhaps next in interest to the stories of the saints are the religious folk-tales; delicious and fantastic stories, many of them still retaining a strong Oriental flavour. These are in most cases, like the legend of Saint Barlaam and Saint Josaphat (for which see the "Legenda Aurea"), Eastern tales converted to the uses of Christianity. Most of them are located in Egypt or Constantinople, and are probably amongst the most ancient of the Mary-legends known in the West. A version of "The Christian's Surety" has been found by Mr. Baring Gould in a Greek sermon of the tenth century. It is an early example of the anti-Semitic tale, of which I have given another instance in the story here called "Gaude, Maria!"—the original of the "Prioress' Tale" in Chaucer's Canterbury Tales. "The Christian's Surety" is a great favourite with the later French compilers; it appears in Gautier de Coincy's collection, and also forms the subject of a miracle play in "Les Miracles de Notre Dame par Personnages." So, also, does the rather *bizarre* story of "The Child Vowed to the Devil," a tale which, like that of "The Dove that Returned," seems

to have some affinities with the wild romances of the "Vitæ Patrum." *Introduction*

After the folk-tales, sometimes inextricably confused with them, come the mystical and allegorical legends. It is amongst these that we find the most lovely and poetic of the miracles of Our Lady; though even such stories are not entirely free from that extraordinary blend of mockery and piety, high heaven and base earth—the "love that built the cathedrals" and the "laughter that filled them with grotesques"—which seems inseparable from Gothic art. Designed for the most part to light up some dogma or observance of the Church, or glorify the religious life, these are quieter, more visionary in tone, than either the folk-tales or legends of the saints. I have already referred to the rosary *motif*, here represented by "The Chaplet of Roses," "The Lily," and the second part of "Sponsæ Christi." In the beautiful story of "Bread of Angels" we have an allegory of the Mass; in "The Knight of the Costrel," the sacrament of penance. To the mystical class belong also, in some degree, "The Celestial Medicine," "The Divine Encounter," and the celebrated story of "The Nun who Desired the World." This, the original of Mr. Davidson's "Ballad of a Nun," and M. Maeterlinck's "Sœur Beatrice," is almost the only Mary-legend which has been treated by a writer of our own time: and for that reason I have not retold it here.

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Finally, in the legend of "The Church that is in Egypt" we have a story which stands in many respects alone. The other Miracles of the Virgin, as I have said, form a cycle, of which numerous MSS., in French and Latin, still survive. But of this tale there is no trace in any of the Western collections: only one version of it is known, an Ethiopian text, containing Miracles of the Virgin and magical prayers, now in the Lady Meux MSS. This MS. has been translated and printed by Dr. E. A. T. Wallis Budge, to whose great kindness I am indebted for permission to include "The Church that is in Egypt" in this book. In it we have a legend which puts us in immediate touch with the primitive Coptic Church. It will be noticed that it differs greatly in tone from the other Miracles, which have had time, in the course of a long descent through many MSS., to lose most of their primitive features and pick up mediæval ones in their place. This tale has been, so to speak, isolated: as a result, it is fresh, strange, entirely un-European. It is evident, from its accurate local colour, that it was written in Egypt for the use and encouragement of the Coptic Church, and probably not later than the fifth century. Theophilus, or Philotheus, whose vision it relates, was Patriarch of Alexandria A.D. 385–412; and this story must have taken shape shortly after, if not actually during, his life. The account that it gives of the Flight into Egypt contains many details which are not found in the apocryphal

gospels of the Infancy, the Pseudo-Matthew, and Saint James, from which the Eastern Church obtained its history and the Byzantine artists their iconography of the life of the Virgin and the childhood of Christ. The Holy Family here go on foot; Salome, as in the Coptic History of Joseph the Carpenter, accompanies them. The incidents of the healing fountain, and the dwelling in the temple of Heliopolis, are peculiar to this legend, but the story of the two thieves appears, in a slightly different form, in the Arabic Gospel of the Infancy. There is little, however, in the Apocryphal Gospels to equal the circumstantial and realistic quality of the vision of Theophilus, which is full of the living and convincing touches that come only from the most intense simplicity or the highest art. It is too old to be mediæval, for it comes from a period when the freshness of childhood still hung about the legends of the Church, and belongs rather to that eternal art of story-telling which is neither ancient nor modern, but exists wherever human life exists and is observed. *Introduction*

So much for the facts. This book, however, has not been written for the student of facts, who will naturally fly to some more learned treatise: it is offered rather to the amateur of old faiths and fancies, who may find here a dim picture of the City of Mansoul as it was before the Reformation came, like some spiritual County Council, to cleanse its streets of the picturesque and unprofitable litter of the past. My object has been to show something

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of the intimate charm of the mediæval attitude towards the Virgin Mary—an attitude part-familiar, part-chivalrous, part-devout, which was far-reaching in its effect on the mental temper and artistic ideals of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. This was the attitude which produced such sculpture as the Gothic Madonnas of Flanders and France; such paintings as the Psalter of Saint Louis; such poems as "Veni Coronaberis." For those who wrote, read, and lived by these legends, the Virgin Mary was at once Queen, Mother, Mystery and familiar friend; not only the ineffable Mother of God, but also the very courteous chatelaine of Heavenly Syon, who would not disdain to open the window to her lovers when Saint Peter shut the door, as "The Window of Paradise" relates: the practical and resourceful Help of Christians, no less than the Mystic Rose.

Less awful than the Deity, more powerful than the Saints, one might speak with "Madame Saint Mary" as woman to woman, as lover to mistress; might rely on her human sympathy in matters of the body, as well as on her mystical intercession in the affairs of the soul. Thus it comes about that a certain familiarity, a bold reliance on the patience and comprehension of the Woman, her interest in all things little and great, her desire for her servants' love, becomes mixed with the awe and reverence proper to those who invoke the Queen of Heaven. As a mother evokes in her children at once the simplest, most intimate

confidence and also the most exalted emotion: as they come to her, with no sense of incongruity, in their most trivial necessities no less than in the most sacred moments of their lives, so "Goddes Moder and oures" received from those who were in every sense her children, simple and familiar friendship, mystical adoration, and unfailing trust. *Introduction*

To drag back this sentiment and its literary expression from the shadow-land to which it has retreated is, therefore, the aim of this book. In writing it, I have made full use of the editorial privileges which my mediæval predecessors always allowed themselves, and have paraphrased, rather than translated, the material from which I worked. Sometimes I have condensed, sometimes expanded; sometimes two or three different versions of a legend have been collated and the best details chosen from each. No plot—except for really necessary editing—has been tampered with, but the student of hagiography must not be offended if he find here and there a story, known to him in an intolerably bald, didactic, or improper form, which has been, like the kiss which Rodolphe received back from the lady, "revu, corrigé, et considerablement augmenté," in its passage from the middle to the present age.

I must here offer my most sincere thanks to two kind friends, without whose constant help and encouragement this version of the Miracles of Our Lady could scarcely have been made. Firstly, to Mr. J. A. Herbert, of the Depart-

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ment of MSS. in the British Museum, who first introduced me to the Mary-legends, and has throughout placed his great knowledge of the subject at my disposal, and given me all possible help. Secondly, to Mr. Arthur Machen, who read the MS., and to whose kind suggestions and criticisms it owes more than can here be expressed.

E. U.

Asolo, *May* 1905.

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AND FIRST THE PROLOGUE

HERE begin we a little Prologue concerning the miracles of our sweet Lady, that is the Most Blessed Virgin Mary. For whereas to the glory of God Almighty, pious men have ofttimes told and set in writing many fair miracles of the glorious Saints that are in Paradise, the which miracles the Divine Majesty has done through them; how much more ought we to tell the wonders and mercies that are done by the Blessed Virgin that is the Mother of God, since these are sweeter than honey!

The Prologue

And I would have you to know, *dilectissimi*, that these miracles of hers, and all the holy gestes and devout adventures herein writ, tell not of any greater marvel than that of her unfailing love. For truly it is a matter for great wonder and thankfulness, that she has this desire toward us, that are her poor children, for that we were made the brethren of her Son. Moreover we likewise rehearse that love which her loyal servants had for her; by the which love they were enabled to look upon her face, and hear her voice, as is testified in the histories of

The Prologue

Saint Bon and Saint Thomas of Canterbury. And by these acts of hers we may further learn after what fashion she would have us love her: as that we should worship her queenly, and serve her with sacrifice and with purity, and call upon her as on a friend. And also you may read of that most piteous charity which the Queen of Angels hath us-ward, whereby she is constrained to show mercy to the poor and simple, and to succour the wicked in their extremity, and to defend her servitors: for truly doth she show courtesy to all that reverently entreat her Name. Therefore for all these causes is it befitting that these her miracles should now be written, to confirm in her love the thoughts of all faithful Christians, and to stir the hearts of slothful men.

And furthermore, *carissimi*, let it not be to you an occasion of contempt that of these tales ensuing many tell of them that took on the habit of religion; and of the graces and adventures that to them befell. For know that to those that dwell in quietness in the convent, having their minds set on Heaven and keeping their souls in peace, holy visitations often come. Yea! as in sheltered gardens flowers do prosper, so in the cloister pious histories flourish: these are little chalices of honeyed sweetness very often, and ever matters meet for thankfulness, for they be harbingers of a spiritual fruit. Come therefore to this garden, where I, that am but a pilgrim and a sojourner therein, have sought out certain flowers, to

wit lilies, for the better honouring of Our Lady's beauty, and that all her faithful children may be glad. *The Prologue*

AND HERE FOLLOW THE MIRACLES OF OUR LADY.

THE CHAPLET OF ROSES

AND HEREIN OF A YOUNG RELIGIOUS THAT BY HIS DEVOTION DID CROWN THE VIRGIN MARY EVERY DAY

The Chaplet of Roses

HERE tell we the history of a young monk, the which lived under the rule of our father Saint Benedict and had a very great devotion for the glorious Virgin Mary: and because of this love of his, he kept in his cell a fair image of that Lady, carved and painted to the semblance of a living woman, that thereto he might pay his courteous reverence. And even as lovers of an earthly mistress do search out and contrive what curious and delightful service they may offer her, deeming themselves happy in that they may spend themselves for her honour, and looking for no better reward, so also did this young religious for his heavenly Friend.

Thus it came about that in the summer, which is the time of roses, he would salute the Flower of the World under that name of Rosa Mystica which her litany hath given: and he would also make for her a chaplet of red roses, and would offer it upon his knees to the image that was in his cell, making a very humble salutation to the Lady of his desire. And so great was his ardour

The Chaplet of Roses

of giving that it wrought upon itself a miracle, as love indeed hath power to do: for though it was but to the image that he brought his gift and did his homage, yet an Heavenly Presence deigned to receive it. For lo! in that place where the statue was accustomed to stand, the glorious Virgin herself came at the prayer of her lover that yearned toward her with so ardent and so pure desire, and she bent her head very graciously towards him that he might the better place the chaplet of roses on her brow. And for this cause his heart was filled with a deep and grateful joy; and every day he wove anew from fresh and perfect flowers his Lady's chaplet, and every day the Queen of Angels stooped towards him that she might receive her servant's crown. And because Saint Mary's love ever inciteth the soul to humility and good works, this brother was most meetly subject to his Abbot and to all his superiors, and to the Rule, so that they loved him.

But a time came when the summer was ended and there were no more roses: then this young monk became exceeding sad and pensive, and fell at last into a most grievous melancholy, for that now the season of flowers was done he could no longer make a chaplet for the crowning of his Mistress, that is the Virgin Queen. And he stayed many hours in sadness, gazing upon her image that stood uncrowned in his cell and thinking within himself that all the joy he had in loving her was dead, because he could do nothing for her praise. Sad indeed was the

image without its living garland, and no longer did the Mystic Rose bow toward him when he knelt at her feet. *The Chaplet of Roses*

Now the Abbot, that loved this brother well for his simplicity and devoutness, was greatly troubled at the sight of the melancholy into which he had come; and knowing naught of the secret favours which Our Lady had once shown to this servant of hers, he could not guess the cause of his sadness. Therefore calling the young man to him, he asked him privily what ailed him, conjuring him by holy obedience to tell the source of his grief. And being so commanded, the brother, as is the duty of every religious toward his Father in God, did tell all the truth, every word of it; how that he greatly loved that image of Saint Mary that he had in his cell, and how he was sad because he could find no more roses to make a chaplet for her head, for he knew not how else he might please her.

Then said the Abbot to him for his comfort, "My son, because now the winter comes in due season, and you cannot any longer make chaplets of roses for Our Lady's honour, therefore must you find some other way of service: for summer and winter alike have their duties, and come alike by the will of God. And in the place of that gift of roses that has been the emblem of your love, I charge you that you salute each morning the image of God's Mother, saying twenty-five times the *Ave Maria*. For the prayers of her faithful servants are as flowers in that Lady's crown."

The Chaplet of Roses

The brother went away greatly consoled, and did in all things as his Abbot had ordained to him, saluting Saint Mary each morning with twenty-five *Aves* well and devoutly said. And therefrom he had exceeding comfort, for now it was permitted to him to look again upon the Lady whom he loved. And he saw that each time he repeated that Angelic Salutation, a fresh and perfect rose came into her hands where he gazed on her in his cell, and from these she wove for herself a right fair chaplet, even such an one as he had been accustomed to make: so that when his devotion was ended, the crown of his Mistress was complete. Which thing was so great a consolation and delight to him, that he left his melancholy and entered into a very holy joy; growing day by day in his devotion toward that glorious Virgin, who of her tenderness and mercy doth thus help her lovers in their devoirs.

Now this monk of whom we speak had yet a father and a mother in the world, whom he loved with a proper and a filial love; and desiring greatly to see them how they did, he sought and obtained the permission of his Abbot so to do. Now when he was given leave that he might go on this journey, he was so filled with joy at the thought of these parents, the which he had not seen for many years, that he forgat all else; even his devotion to that Lady whose love is above that of any earthly friend. And when the day of his departure was come, he set out right early in the morning, his thoughts

all earthwards, without having first saluted her image that stood in his cell. And it was a very cold day, white with rime, for they were near to the season of Christ's birth. Another monk of that abbey went with him, the which was a discreet and pious brother; and they went quickly, heeding but little the hardships of the way. *The Chaplet of Roses*

But at the hour of Prime, when they were already far upon the road, this servant of Our Lady remembered how that he had that morning left his Mistress without the crown of worship she was accustomed to receive; and when it came into his mind, he was full of grief for it. "For," said he, "I am but recreant knight and false servant of that Queen of Ladies; and this day in Heaven her chaplet will be lacking by my fault."

So, being in great contrition and minded to make such amend as he might, he said to his brother that was with him that he should go in front a short way, for he would be solitary awhile. And when this one had done so, and the young monk found himself alone, he went from the road into the field that was beside it, and threw himself upon his knees exceeding humbly and cried mercy and forgiveness of the Holy Virgin because he had been tempted of earthly affection, and had forgotten to salute her as he ought. And he bewailed his fault with tears, crying, "Alas! most sweet Lady, thy servant whom thou didst love so well has most foully betrayed thee!" And when he

The Chaplet of Roses

had so done, he recited with exceeding great devotion the twenty-five *Aves* with which he was used to greet her in his cell.

Now his companion, that had gone forward on the way, hastening somewhat because it was a keen and bitter wind, wondered that his brother did not rejoin him. And presently, because still he did not come, this one turned back along the road to find the reason of his delay. But when that he had gone a little while he ceased his steps, being in great astonishment; for he saw that to the place where he had left his comrade, that was a country-side and desolate, a great and splendid meinie had now come, to wit, a very beautiful Lady that was robed right loyally, and about her a company of angels and virgins crowned with jewels. But the Lady's head was bare.

And though it was the season of winter and hard weather, though snow lay in the field wherein she stood, and no flowers there were in the thicket nor leaves upon the trees, this Lady was weaving a chaplet of most fair and perfect roses, one by one as they came into her hands: and when she had done it, she placed it on her head as a crown. Then all the meinie of the angels and the virgins bowed before her, for she was seen to be crowned with the sovereignty of love: and they cried together, *Ave Maria!*

And seeing this marvel, that monk went hastily to the place where he had left his companion; and there he found him where he knelt

in the field, rapt in holy contemplation, but the Lady he could not see any more. So he roused him from his ecstasy, for now he was full of dread, knowing that he had gazed on holy things: and he told him all that which he had beheld, namely that gracious miracle which is done in Heaven when we poor children pray. Then did this one confess to his friend the whole of the matter; and of his fault and penitence, and the great mercy he had had, for that Our Lady had deigned to help him. And they went their way full of rejoicing, their hearts being uplifted by thanksgiving and celestial love, and singing sweet praises of that Virgin Mother, *The Chaplet of Roses*

Virgo clemens!
Mater Amabilis!
Regina sacratissimi Rosarii!

THE HEAVENLY VESTURE

THE HEAVENLY VESTURE

HERE WE TELL OF A BISHOP THAT SAID MASS IN HIS CHURCH BEFORE SAINT MARY AND HER MEINIE: TO WHOM THE SAID LADY DID GIVE A NOBLE VESTMENT

The Heavenly Vesture

IN the days when Pepin ruled in France, the blessed Saint Bon was bishop of Clermont in Auvergne; the same being a just, a simple, and an holy man. He ruled his diocese with charity, he was constant in all good works, and though he had exceeding great compassion on the faults of others, yet did his own sins always move him to a most lively contrition: and beyond all these virtues, that were so proper to his state, he had a very loving devotion to our holy Mother, the Blessed Virgin Mary. And because he was a man of good and simple heart, that wearied not in love nor in well-doing, being filled with that charity that will not have reward—for these things, the place of his pilgrimage shone with a peculiar glory in the eyes of the angels, being made radiant with something of that light which is in Heaven. There they moved as in their home, standing there, no less than in the Empyrean, before the very countenance of God: for truly Paradise is not a

The Heavenly Vesture

place, unless it be that place where love may dwell. Yet, because he ever walked with eyes downcast, desiring in his humility a greater perfection, Saint Bon discerned not the marvels that lay about him. Rather did he bewail the sins and shortcomings that withheld him, as he believed, from the perfect performance of his heavenly devoir, and so from the blessedness of those called to be saints. And for this cause he spent long hours in prayer and supplication, in that his life did, as he thought, so little honour to that Queen of Queens whom he would serve.

Now it happened thus, that on the vigil of the feast of the Assumption of Our Lady, Saint Bon stayed after the singing of Vespers alone in the choir of his cathedral-church; and being moved by deep contemplation of the mystery of the Assumption to a very lively love, he rested many hours in prayer, offering his tears, his lauds and supplications at Our Lady's feet. So night came upon him, and still he stayed, uplifted by his devotion above remembrance of time. Nor did he know that in so doing he had trespassed upon the angels' hour, for that they made his church the sanctuary of their night-watches; for where meekness and purity offer the sacrifice, there may the angelic censers swing.

And he ceased not his orison till the hour of midnight was come. Then did he raise his head full joyously, and cried with a loud voice, saying: "Exaltata est Sancta Dei Genitrix," in honour of the coming of the feast. And when he had

so done, lo! he was altogether filled with amazement; for of a sudden he saw that a light exceeding great, the which made dim the little lamp before the altar, was come into the church, and in its shining many angels. Now came there white processions into the choir and stood about him as he knelt on the stones. These were those saints that stand in Paradise, all the meinie of Our Lady and her Son. He saw the blessed martyrs, Saint Vincent and Saint Laurence, vested as deacons for the saying of the Mass; and George and Alban, the soldiers of Christ made glorious. He saw, too, those holy and charitable bishops that had gone before him; the stars of the Church of God, whose light he ever kept in mind—Jerome and Gregory, Ambrose and Augustine.

The Heavenly Vesture

Then was Saint Bon filled with much fear and reverence, saying: "Who am I, most sinful, that I should be here?" And he fell down upon the stones of the pavement, crying aloud in the words of the Patriarch Jacob: "Quam terribilis est, locus iste! non est hic aliud nisi domus Dei, et porta caeli." That is to say, How dreadful is this place! This is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of Heaven.

But whilst that he lay there full of awe, he heard the comfortable sound of chanting exceeding sweet; and being rapt from his fears by this celestial melody, very slowly and reverently he raised up his head. Then saw he that white company of virgins whose high devoir it is to attend on the Mother of God: Catherine of

The Heavenly Vesture

the Wheels, Lucy of the Eyes, with Agnes, Cecilia, and also Dorothy; and in the midst of them was that sweet Lady, the Blessed Virgin Mary, Queen of Angels, and she was crowned with jewels and apparelled right royally, yet walked she with most gracious humbleness. So all this train came forth into the choir, and placed themselves orderly therein, and they sang their hymn unto the end. And they stood in a bright light circle-wise about the altar, as in Paradise they stand about the Altar of the Lamb; but the light came not to the place where Saint Bon was kneeling.

"Then heard he the saints that cried to Our Lady, asking her whom she would have sing the Mass of her feast. And Our Lady answered them: "I will have that my servant who kneels beyond the circle of light, and thence doth offer for me his love and tears, asking naught in return. For this cause have I chosen him to offer for me the sacrifice of love."

Then was Saint Bon greatly abashed and full of fear; for, seeing his church thus filled with all the Host of Heaven, and having still in his ears the song of angels, it seemed to him too great presumption that he, the meanest of God's servants, should minister before these glorious ones. But whilst he kneeled in adoration came two angels, and raised him up and led him to the altar at the Virgin's bidding; and there they vested him for the saying of the Mass. And the glorious deacons Vincent and Laueence served him; and the altar was censed by

angels, and by angels' hands the sacring-bell was rung.

The Heavenly Vesture

Now when he stood thus before that altar, where every day he was used to offer the Holy Sacrifice for the Church and for his people whom he loved, courage came anew to the heart of Saint Bon; for at this place he was accustomed to stand always as before God's face, in humbleness of spirit but fearing naught, for that he had an heavenly Intercessor. Therefore it seemed to him no more matter for dread, but rather for thanksgiving, that he, unworthy, was thus by divine mercy admitted to the Communion of the Saints; for he knew that no man by his own power might attain to it. And, all things being set in order, he sang the Mass of Our Lady right clearly and well. And when he was come to the words, "Assumpta est Maria in coelum: gaudent Angeli," all the saints and angels bowed before her, and cried with a loud voice, "Alleluia!"

And when that it was come to the ending of the Mass, the most holy Virgin kneeled in the midst of her saints, that she might receive the blessing of Bon her servant; and afterwards she called him to her feet, and spoke with him full sweetly, and gave to him a guerdon for the devoir he had done, even an alb, a very noble vestment that she had brought with her from Paradise. And she warned Saint Bon very straitly, saying:

"See that you let none other put upon himself this holy alb, the which I give you in

The Heavenly Vesture

reward because you loved me with that love which casteth out fear, and have well and truly sung the Mass of this my feast; for I can in no wise offer this Mass in Paradise, where is the Holy Sacrifice made perfect, but only by the hands of my servants here on earth. And this that I have given you is of that stuff which the virgins my hand-maidens weave for the vesting of the saints; even the vesture of a lowly spirit, which is acceptable to God. See, therefore, that you keep it closely, for great virtue is therein. And look further, that none come to this church that is my sanctuary in the night hours when my mysteries are here sung: for none may gaze on this matter, save him to whom the heavenly vestment has been given."

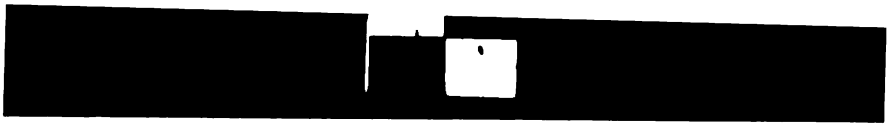
Then did the Virgin Mary and all her train go back to heaven; and Saint Bon went to his house much comforted, for now he knew well that his poor love was pleasing to Our Lady, and that she looked favourably upon the imperfection of his prayers. And he laid up with exceeding care the vesture that she had given him, and by it he did much healing and brought many souls to God.

Soon after that Saint Bon had died and was surely gone to the joy of Heavenly Syon, a new bishop was made in his place; and he believed not the wonders which were told of that holy man, for he was a prelate of worldly conversation and doubting mind. And it vexed him much that the alb of Saint Bon, the which was laid up in the treasury of the cathedral,

The Heavenly Vesture

should be held a vestment of no earthly making, and that for this he might not wear it for the saying of the Mass; for it was exceeding fair. Further, he held that to be but an ignorant and idle fantasy which would have the church sacred to the angels in the night hours because of those words which Saint Bon had had from Our Lady's lips. Therefore, on a certain night, this bishop went alone into the choir of his cathedral-church; and he took from the treasury the alb of Saint Bon, and there before the altar would vest himself therein. But before the heavenly vestment had touched his shoulders, lo! his senses left him, and he woke not till the dawn, and then he lay on his bed in his chamber that was within the bishop's house. And the alb of Saint Bon was found on the high altar, and a fair linen cloth was on it.

Then was that bishop greatly astonished, and his heart was moved, and he called his people together and told them that which had befallen: to the intent that all might know it was unlawful that any should witness the divine secrets which every night were celebrated at that altar, save only him to whom Our Lady, of her mercy, hath given the Heavenly Vesture.



GAUDE MARIA !

HOW WICKED MEN TOOK A LITTLE BOY, BECAUSE HE SANG THE RESPOND OF OUR LADY VERY SWEETLY; AND HOW GOD'S MOTHER DID PRESERVE HIM

HOLY Scripture doth declare to us that it is our duty to make known the benevolent works of Almighty God; for these are marvellous, and their telling maketh glad His children's hearts. As the Psalmist saith, "Cantate ei, et psallite ei; narrate omnia mirabilia ejus." Therefore I will tell here the history of a mercy that He granted at the hand of His Blessed Mother, Queen of Heaven, for the solace of a poor woman, a widow, the which greatly loved that sweet Lady. *Gaude Maria!*

This woman lived in a city of England, and so poor she was, that she was forced to wander in the street and ask an alms. And she had one son, a very fair child; he was loved of all for his beauty, for though he lived but on charity he was exceeding comely and of good stature. For the love of God and the Blessed Virgin, this poor woman taught her child what scholarship she could; and Saint Mary of her kindliness helped her in this devoir, for she

Gaude Maria!

put into the child's heart so great a love of learning that in half a year he knew more than many children that have been four years to school. Nor had she ever occasion to chastise him, for he forgot nothing that he was told.

Soon the little boy could sing, and soon read; and so well did he sing, with so sweet and piteous a voice, that so soon as he did begin, all ran to hear him, both clerks and lay; for they said, "It is like a little angel's song." Never was heard such music from a child. And because of the delight that they had in his singing, all that heard him would make him gifts; meat, bread, and also money; the which he gladly took, and carried straitway to his mother, for he loved her exceeding well.

And he said, "Dear mother, while I was very little you did nourish and clothe me from the alms that you gained; but I cannot bear that you should any longer beg our bread, since I am of an age to earn it. Therefore if God and our sweet Lady preserve to me my voice and keep me safe and sound you shall no more wander in the streets; but every day I shall bring you enough of bread and meat and all those things whereof we stand in need."

Thus did that little boy cherish his mother, and would have her rest by the fireside with her spinning, whilst he went to and fro in the streets with his songs: and all heard him right willingly and gave him what he asked, so that he and his mother were well provided. And amongst the many fair songs that he knew,

that child greatly loved the respond that Robert King of France did make for the feast of the Purification of Our Lady; to wit, that which begins, "Gaude, Maria Virgo, cunctas hereses sola interemisti." For the words of this hymn are very fair and piteous, and the melody whereto they are sung exceeding sweet; and the little boy sang it so well to the glory of our gracious Lady, that many wept to hear it. And so gentle he was, so full of prudence and courtesy, that all loved him dearly and would have taken him to their houses, there to feast him; but when his song was done, he waited not for any pleasure, but went home to his mother with that which he had gained. And that poor woman daily entreated God's Mother Saint Mary, that she would have the child in her keeping, lest evil should befall him when he went alone through the town.

Gaude Maria!

And one day, as this little boy went singing through the streets, he came to the Jewry; and great company of folk were assembled there, knights and burgesses, clerks and lay, for in this place many bought and sold. When these people saw the child, they cried to him that he should sing Our Lady's song; for these were Catholic men, that rightly loved the Blessed Virgin. Then, so soon as he began, many other ran to hear him from the streets that were near, being much moved by the sweetness of his singing, that was indeed a pleasant sound most agreeable to God; and with them came a certain Jew, that heard how the child did sing

Gaude Maria!

in the midst of the Jewry the praises of the Queen of Heaven whom they revile.

Now at the time of this man's coming, the little chorister began the second part of his song, that, namely, which saith,

> "Gabrielem archangelum scimus divinitus te esse affatum;
> Uterum tuum de Spiritu Sancto credimus impraegnatum."

Then was the Jew much wrathful; and when that the last line was sung, that is,

> "Erubescat Judaeus infelix, qui dicit Christum Joseph semine esse natum!"

the which puts all Jews to derision, he could not contain his hatred; for greatly did he long to kill this child that thus poured contempt upon his race.

Nevertheless, he dissembled his anger; for he knew that the people loved the little boy, and greatly would they be enraged against any that did him hurt. Therefore must he bide his time that he might lay hands on him in secret, for this was his resolve. And he waited till all the folk were gone out of the street, for no witness must he have, lest any, suspecting that he would hurt their little singer, should afterward bring him to his death for it. Then, when the child was alone, this Jew went to him, and spoke him very fairly and invited him to enter his house there to sing.

"For I see well," he said, "that you have

been rightly taught; never have I heard a child sing so sweetly. You please all by your music, and indeed by this Respond that you did chant my heart is altogether filled with pity and compassion. Therefore, if you will come into my house and there sing it again, it shall be good for you and for your mother also." *Gaude Maria!*

Then the child, simply and without fear, as a little angel might, went with that Jew into his house. But, alas! how greatly cruel are God's enemies, and them that know not His Mother's love! So soon as the door was shut the Jew let bring a hatchet, and he dealt the little chorister, that was a child exceeding small, so great a blow that a man would have died of it. The little boy fell down upon the ground, and blood came forth from his fair and tender mouth that sang so sweetly. Then as quickly as he could the Jew made a grave close against the door, and there he buried the child and heaped earth upon him, for now he was afraid of that which he had done.

When the poor woman his mother saw that her little son did not return at the accustomed hour, she was greatly troubled at it; and she prayed Our Lady to watch over the child, for night was near. But when many hours went by, and still he came not, she feared that he was wholly lost. Then so great was her dolour that her heart failed her, and she ran forth into the streets crying aloud and seeking him. Here and there, up and down, she sought and demanded him of all that she met; but none could

Gaude Maria!

give her news of the child. And at last, for that darkness fell and she could no longer seek him, she was constrained to go back to her home much sorrowful, and there did make her complaint to the Blessed Virgin, begging only for death because she had lost her little boy.

And she said: "Sweet Lady, Saint Mary, for that the Scripture telleth us that you sought your own Child sorrowing when He tarried in Jerusalem alone, keep, I pray you, my little son, that is defenceless in the city this night, for I know not where to seek him. Alas, most piteous Mother! my heart is sore; for I feel and know that but dolorous news shall I get if He that can do all things cometh not to my relief. Therefore in Him and His sweet Mother I put all my trust, for very surely none other can assist me."

So weeping and praying, that poor woman passed the whole of the night; and when day was come she went out into the streets again to seek her child, asking news of all the folk that she met.

But they answered: "We know not where he is, but this we know, that there is none in the city, neither clerk nor lay, who will not greatly grieve if he is come to any hurt, for we all love him."

And one there was that said: "Good woman, yester evening I saw your little son in the Jewry, and there he did sing the Respond of Our Lady in a voice most sweet and piteous, as he can; and so clear and loud he sang that the Jews came

from all parts to hear him. It may well be that they have taken him to do him some hurt, for greatly does it displease them to hear the sweet and pleasant praises of God's Mother, whom they hate. Therefore, if they have killed the child, we will discover it, that they may die for their misdeeds." *Gaude Maria!*

Another cried: "Small doubt is there that the Jews misliked this little boy, for he praised Our Lady so graciously that none could resist it. If it be as you say, surely the glorious Virgin will reveal it by her might, that her chorister may be avenged."

Then was the poor mother beside herself with grief, for now she was assured that the Jews had taken her little son to kill him. And she cried to Our Lady in her despair, and told her openly that if she restored not the child, no longer would she trust in her pity and power. Yea, she was in such bitterness of spirit that I could not tell you half her sorrow; for she wept so exceeding sore that she could take neither meat nor drink. And all were greatly moved by it, grieving most heartily because they had lost their little chorister whom they loved.

But the great sin that had been done could not for ever be hidden, for it was God's will that it should be revealed, to glorify His holy Name and that of His dear Mother, Lady Mary. Therefore it happened after many days that the sorrowing mother, that went day and night through the streets wringing her hands and calling on Our Lady for her child, came by

Gaude Maria!

God's grace to the Jewry. And many people ran together hearing her cries, the which had exceeding pity of her grief; for now all hope that she might find the child had left them, and they judged her to be mad with sorrow because she sought him still. But this poor woman stood and cried, "My son, my little son, my heart is breaking for you! My pretty child, if that you are alive stay not so long from me, for I need you sore. Sweet son, dear boy! where are you? Can you not speak to your mother, who is like to die of grief? Alas! little one, you will come to me no more, for my heart tells me that in this street you were killed and buried by evil men."

Then went she to and fro, tearing her hair and crying, "Hard, hard is the heart that would not break for such a grief! Ah, Mother of the King of Heaven! how long with clasped hands have I begged of you my little boy! I gave him altogether to you, and taught him right learning that he might the better serve you and your sweet Son. But what have you done with him, Lady, and where is he? Tell me, tell me, where he is bestowed! Ah, Mother of God, can it be that children which are given into your keeping shall be lost? If that you cannot give him to me alive, then give me death, that I may see him!"

But Madame Saint Mary, that is the fountain of all mercy, had compassion on this poor woman, and turned her sorrow into joy. For while that she and the folk that were about her

made this complaint, of a sudden they heard a voice that sang exceeding sweetly; and they knew that it was the voice of the little chorister, for none other sang so well. And the words of the song were that Respond of Our Lady, the which he had so greatly loved, namely: *Gaude Maria!*

"Gaude, Maria Virgo, cunctas hereses sola interemisti;
Quae Gabrielis archangeli dictis credidisti."

Verily, though he lay in his grave that was within the house of the Jew, yet so high and clear was his voice that all might hear it.

And when that poor mother heard her little son, that sang as if he were yet alive, then was she straitway lifted up with a fervour of great joy, so that she cried to the Blessed Virgin, saying:

"Sweet Lady, sweet Saint Mary! I hear my child! I hear my child!"

Then was great tumult; all the people crying, "To the Jews! To the Jews, that have taken our little chorister to hurt him! for well we know he lies within this house."

And all went to enter the said house, and did attack and beat the Jews that would let them from it; and breaking down the door went into every chamber, calling by name on the child that was lost; for they said: "Of a surety they have hidden him." Then were those evil men that had killed and buried him greatly afraid, and would have held back the people, but they could not. Therefore they fled away

Gaude Maria!

whilst all were busied with their quest, lest they might be taken and burned for their sins.

But when they had searched chamber and cockloft, and still found not the child, them that sought were exceeding perplexed at it.

"By Holy Rood!" said they, "this is devilry indeed, that we find him not, for here we heard him sing, and of a surety here he must be! Yet there is no part of this house wherein we have not sought him, therefore if we see him not it must be that they have buried him in the earth."

Then did they make search where there might be a pit dug; and at last, when all were weary and they knew not where next to look, they found behind the door earth heaped, the which those Jews had done the better to conceal him. Then they cried: "Verily, here he must be; for it was from this side that we heard his voice."

Then all together they fetched spades, and straitway removing the earth as quickly as they might, there they found the little boy lying in a trench all safe and sound; and he had no grief, but seemed rather as if God's Mother had cherished him at her breast. And all who saw it marvelled greatly, for the child's cheeks were as red, his face as fair, as a newly opened flower, though he had lain within this pit for many days. And they lifted him out and carried him to his mother.

When that poor woman had her little son again, how close and dear did she hold him,

kissing a hundred times his forehead and his face! So great a joy filled her heart that no word could she speak, for it seemed to her that greater wealth she had than any lady in the land. But the townsfolk, that were exceeding glad for that their little chorister was come again, came about the child, and asked him that he should tell them by God's grace what had happened and where he had been. Also, they desired to know how his head had been so greatly hurt; for now they could see the wound that he had of the hatchet of the Jew, the which was like to have cut his head in twain, though so well had the glorious Virgin healed it that no herb nor unguent did it need. *Gaude Maria!*

Then said the child, that knew not how long he had been lost: "Yesternight, when all the company was gone from this street, a Jew that loved me not did beg me to go to his house, swearing that he would do great things for my mother if I would sing for him there; for he would hear Our Lady's Respond. But when I was come into the house, he did wound me with a hatchet he had, and I know not what he did with me then, for with that blow I fell fast asleep. And so soundly I slept that I think I should have been sleeping still, nor would have woke for anything that might be, but a little while since a very fair Lady came to me, and I know that she is the Mother of Jesu Christ. And this Lady did wake me, and said that I slept too long and was but slothful; for it was time that I should sing her Respond, as was my

Gaude Maria!

duty every day to do. Then she went away, and I began to sing as she bade me, as well as I could do it in the place that I was in."

Then cried all the clerks and priests, "Give thanks! give thanks! for a great miracle has been done; for the Blessed Virgin hath come from Paradise to save her little chorister from the hands of the Jews."

And had I ten or twenty tongues, I could not tell half the joy there was; how that many great bells were rung, and processions made, that the Mother of God might be glorified and extolled for this her most piteous grace. And the townsfolk did take many Jews because of it, and some were burned and some baptized.

Then, when all was done, that poor woman took her little child to her home, and there she cherished him greatly and bred him in Saint Mary's love. Little do I know of fate they had, or what did do, for indeed there is no more in my book; but very surely he grew in all virtue and worthiness, and stayed ever faithful servant of that Lady, who had brought him out of the power of the wicked that he might come again to his mother's arms.

BREAD OF ANGELS

HERE WE TELL HOW A CERTAIN NOVICE WAS AN HUNGERED, AND OUR LADY GAVE HIM MEAT

Bread of Angels

IT is told how a certain young man came to the house of Cîteaux, that he might be made a novice of this brotherhood: for he ardently desired to take the habit of religion, having his heart filled with exceeding great love for Our Lord and Our Lady, so that he longed to serve them. But because he had been gently bred, and had lived always sumptuously at the house of his father, that was a noble seigneur keeping much estate, this novice could little endure the hardships of the Rule. And especially the meat wherewith he was served in the convent did seem to him most harsh and savourless, so that scarcely could he bear to eat of it, and he was like to die of hunger. And of this he had great grief, for he knew not whether he should be able to end the noviciate he had begun, because of the weakness of his flesh.

Therefore, being advised by his Superior, he strove to conquer this frailty; praying to Our Lady Saint Mary with exceeding great fervour, that she would help him, and turn his heart

Bread of Angels

to a love of holy poverty, and make sweet to him the hard and sour bread wherewith he was nourished. Yet still his stomach turned from it, whereby he endured great pains both of body and soul: for he saw that they that were of the brotherhood received this food gladly and ate of it with contentment, the which he could no wise do.

Now it happened one night that he had greatly prayed for strength that he might endure the discipline of the flesh, and had bewailed his state most bitterly before God with tears and supplications: and when he had so done, he lay down in his cell to sleep. And he was exceeding hungry, having still in his hand the piece of dry bread wherewith he had been served for supper; but he could not bear to eat of it, for it was very hard and sour. And as he so slept, the glorious Virgin Mary, who looks most tenderly on all that would serve her Son in the religious life, and seeks ever to help them in the inward battle they must wage, had compassion on him because he was so young and full of grief. And since she knew well what ailed him, she came to him there where he lay on his bed, and took him by the hand, saying:

"Come, little son, rise up and follow me, and I will give you that food of which you stand in need. Now shall you eat to your satisfaction, for I am come not to give you the dry bread of bitterness, but rather to call you to that Banquet which my Son hath spread for His friends."

When the young novice saw the Queen of

Heaven, that stood by his bedside as his mother might do, and heard her gracious words, he rose up, being wholly filled with love divine, and remembering nothing of the hunger that he had. And he thought within himself that she had come to lead him to some great feast; and he had great joy of it. Then she took him by the hand, and led him from his cell and forth into the cloister, and he saw that she would go toward the monastery church, for the which cause he had great amazement. And it was very dark, but in the light of her steps he walked securely. So, when they were come to the church, he looked to see where the banquet might be spread. But no sign was there of any festivity, neither did Our Lady stay to look for it; but she brought him straitway to the place where the great Crucifix was hung, whereon Our Lord and Saviour Jesu Christ displays His Sacred Wounds. *Bread of Angels*

Then, "Look!" said she. "Here is your feast made ready, for this is my Son, your Lord and God, Who died to make all things sweet to you. Therefore should you rejoice, sith now there is in all the world no bread so harsh but that His pains can savour it. But because you know not the taste of that meat which He prepares for His lovers, you go hungry; yet hath He said, 'Accipite et comedite.' Take therefore this crust of bread, the which you despise so greatly, and draw near dreading nothing, for verily He gave Himself that you might be fed. Now shall you dip this your meat into His wounded side, the which was pierced for you;

Bread of Angels

and thereby you shall know whence comes the savour of that food wherewith poverty is nourished for His sake."

Then, when she had so spoken, that merciful Lady did lead the novice to the foot of the Tree of the Cross, and to her Son that hung thereon. And being so taught by her, he, that was now full of fear, for he knew that a great mystery was herein shown him, did let reach out his hand with exceeding awe and reverence, and dipped the crust that he carried deep into the wound that was in his Redeemer's side. And when he had so done, the glorious Virgin saith to him :

" Ecce Panis Angelorum ! "

And lo ! when he did eat of this food, that had been dipped in the holy blood of Jesu Christ, an exceeding great peace entered into that novice's heart, and his hunger was altogether stilled ; and he was refreshed both in body and soul. For it seemed to him that this crust was a Bread of more than earthly savour, the sweetest he had ever taken unto his mouth : so sweet was it that he desired it greatly, nor would he have had any other if he might. And kneeling down before that Cross whence came his comfort, he did give thanks to God and to His compassionate Mother, with great fervour and holy dread ; being uplifted toward his Saviour with thanksgiving and burning love. And he said, as the Patriarch Job did do, " Quae prius nolebat tangere anima mea, nunc, prae angusta, cibi mei sunt " : for now it was revealed and

made known to him by that holy food where- with his hunger had been stilled, how that Jesu Christ did die in great grief upon the Tree that thereby He might bring to us poor sinners that Bread which the Blessed Angels do desire. Yea ! to them that have recourse to Him He giveth ever His very substance for their nourishment: the which maketh sweet the harsh bread of tribulation, and the bitter chalice of His children's tears.

Bread of Angels

THE KNIGHT OF THE COSTREL

OF A GREAT LORD THAT MIGHT NOT ACCOMPLISH THE PENANCE HE HAD; AND HOW SAINT MARY HELPED HIM

The Knight of the Costrel

IN Egypt there was a rich and powerful knight, the which lived in great luxury, lavishly expending his wealth and keeping high estate; and he had many friends and retainers, for he generously entreated them that served him. But because of the ease and splendour that he lived in, this seigneur forgat God and his duty, and went never to Mass, nor yet to confession; for he was proud of heart, and held them to be but fools that told their evil actions to their curate or any other priest. Long did he live in this foolish error, and because he had a dread of the penance that should now be put on him should he turn from it, and of the mocking of his friends, that were of a worldly conversation, he neither made confession nor left his fault.

But one friend he had that was of a right disposition and grieved greatly for the hatred that this knight his comrade had of the sacrament of penance; and he was exceeding desirous to turn him from these courses if he could.

The Knight of the Costrel

Therefore on a certain Good Friday, this gentleman, meeting him in the way, said to the knight, for that he knew him doer of many evil deeds and unconfessed:

"Messire, I marvel much that you can bear to look upon your ill doing, which is greatly displeasing to God and Our Lady, and to the world. For in that you confess yourself never, your sins go alway with you, the which are a heavy burden for any man to bear alone. And behold! Easter Day comes, when every Catholic man should put himself in a state of grace that he may have God's mercy. For on this Friday, God did suffer shame and pain upon the Tree of the Cross, to save His people and rebuke the Enemy in Hell; in that before His Crucifixion all went to damnation. And He won for us so great freedom that none can now be damned that makes confession and repents. Therefore we should every one seek our soul's health in this sacrament, both for sign of our thankfulness that this day He did the penance of the world, and for that our reason bids us so to do. Verily, he is but foolish that neglects it. And I entreat you, brother, that you also will be shriven; for you stand in exceeding need of it. Let us go talk with that hermit who lives in the mountain; he is a good and discreet man of right holy life. Of a surety he will give you no ill counsel, but will tell you all that is meet and right to do."

Now the knight, that had so stubborn a mind, was moved by these words to some

apprehension of the error he was in; and he bethought himself that if the thing indeed were thus, then was he in evil case. Therefore he made soft answer, saying: *The Knight of the Costrel*

"I will go right quickly, for indeed I see that I have held myself toward my Redeemer but unknightly, and have repaid His bounty by discourtesy. And now I feel the load of my sins heavy upon me, the which I will confess full speedily, for I know that I shall have great ease of it."

Then without delay he set forth to the mountain, and with pains he mounted to the harsh rocks whereon the hermit dwelt, who there implored God night and day for all sinners. And that hermit was exceeding glad of his coming, and made good cheer for him. "For," said he, "Gaudium erit in caelo super uno peccatore poenitentiam agente, quam super nonaginta novem justis, qui non indigent poenitentia." That is to say, Joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons which need no repentance.

Then did the knight speak to him a long while of his sins, for indeed there was much to be told; and the hermit, who was expert in the cleansing of souls, knew well how to search and question him, so that presently he was acquainted with the whole of the matter.

And when all was told and confessed, he said to the knight very gladly, "Fair brother, rejoice, for that you shall be cleansed of your

The Knight of the Costrel

sin; and know that soon the love of God and of well doing shall be engrafted in you, by the grace of the holy penance you will have to bear."

Now these words troubled the knight greatly, for he was of those that would have God's mercies living softly the while, and giving nought for that which he had got. Therefore did he say to the hermit:

"Alas, my father, in the matter of this penance I know not how it may be. I can in no wise bear a great one, nor set myself to fasting; for I am none of those lusty fellows that may with ease of body mortify the flesh, since I was bred softly, and love only to eat delicates. All know it is my custom so to do. Therefore, because I live in the world, where all observe me, I must have a penance I can do at my ease; for great austerities will but cast me down quickly and throw me back into sin."

"Messire," answered the hermit, "Do not fear. You shall have so light an one, that none could refuse it, were he never so impotent or so old."

Said the knight, "Pardieu! I ask no better!"

Then that hermit admonished him and said, "Mark well that which I shall ordain to you, for herein shall be proof of your contrition. You shall take this costrel which here you see, and shall go down to the stream that is below, and there you must fill it with water to the brim; and when that you have so done and brought it me again, you shall be quit of all

your sins. But take heed that you sin not again."

The Knight of the Costrel

"So will I do," said the knight, exceeding joyous for the indulgence he had had, for indeed this penance was a little matter. And he took the costrel, that was a vessel made in the fashion of a little flask, and ran quickly to the stream, and seated himself upon the bank. Then dipped he the said flask into the stream to fill it; but the water, that was flowing swiftly, turned aside when it came near and went on either hand, and it stayed empty. And he did all that he could for the filling of his costrel, dipping it more deeply in the pools under the banks, but at the end of his travail it was empty still, at the which he marvelled greatly.

And so striving and accomplishing nothing, he began to wonder what it might be that letted him; for neither in the flowing of the water nor in the fashion of the flask could he see any hindrance, and yet something that was past his wit fought against him. And first he was exceeding wrathful, conceiving that there was witchcraft therein, but presently it came to his mind that it was but the vileness of his own soul that tormented him thus, whereby the water, that was pure, fled from before him, making it to be impossible that his penance should be done. Then was he greatly alarmed, having knowledge of his evil state, and he swore and promised that he would not return to that hermit till his flask was filled and his penance accomplished: for he

The Knight of the Costrel

knew that absolution he must have, though he went oversea to gain it.

But when he had made this vow, seeing his costrel yet empty, he repented incontinent of that which he had said, for it seemed to him that perhaps for this promise he must indeed set himself to long pilgrimage, the which was little to his mind. And he thought:

"Shall I do so great a folly as to leave my wife and honour and the great station in which I am, because this mad hermit hath set me a penance that I may not do? Verily I was but a fool to come to this confession, for only this morning I lived in ease, doubting nothing. It is meet that ill should come of such traffic. But now I will give back this costrel, and will go home; nor will I seek to get me shriven by this madman that hath vexed me thus."

Then he thought again, for indeed he was in great trouble and perplexity, "Yet, if I do this, what shall I say to him? Return? Folly! I cannot thus forsake that which I undertook, for he is no true knight that denies his promise, whatsoever it may be. I have sworn to do this thing, and I will hold to it: therefore I go my way and return not until this flask be filled with water to the brim."

Then did he depart from that place, but he went heavily, doubting whether he might accomplish this quest; for now he knew that God loved him not, because there was no good thing in him. And leaving his wife and his estate, this seigneur went a solitary penitent through the

world, and whenever he came to a spring, or to any running water, there did he stay his steps and dipped his costrel therein. But in no wise could he fill it; and his heart was often wrathful because of this burden that had been set on him, for no peace could he get, neither of body nor soul. Thus did he go many months, by dust and heat, by rain and wind, by snow and frost, ever on foot and companionless. And it came that he wandered for two years and more, searching for the means by which his penance might be done; and now he was become poor, thin, and ragged, suffering cold and weariness, but still his vow was unfulfilled. And a great desire drove him, namely, that he might have peace with God; but no help would he ask, for by his own strength he was resolved to get it.

The Knight of the Costrel

But it happened one winter's day that he wandered in a great and thick forest, and he was very weary and full melancholy, for he went ill-shod, and had but rags to keep his body from the cold. Therefore he began to bewail himself because of the exceeding great misery that he endured, and,

"Alas!" he said, "how foolishly have I lived, that have brought myself to this wretchedness, wherein I am robbed of all ease, and am like to die without honour upon the road! Was ever such unhappy knight? And yet, if at last I can accomplish this quest, I shall have no ill, but rather great blessedness, for then I shall be acceptable to God. Let me wander therefore in patience, for by my own ill-doing am I thus

The Knight of the Costrel

exiled from all joy, and verily he turns from good to evil that turns from the fulfilment of a vow he has made, for this were a disloyal act."

And his heart being softened, he cried also to Our Lady, saying, "Alas! dear Lady, sweet Saint Mary, how greatly discourteous have I been to your Son, that He turns from me thus! Yet I know that I lead not this wretched life for nought, for some day my penance shall be done, and then by your grace I shall have great geurdon from God, Who lifts up sinners and comforts them when it pleases Him. Most glorious Virgin, will you not pray for me? for indeed I stand in great need of your compassion, and I know that you do most powerfully plead for sinners before God. And by my own grace I may never come from my sufferings, for well have I deserved them: and this no man knoweth better than I."

When Madame Saint Mary, that is full pitiful and kindly, heard this poor knight thus entreat her, and saw that he wandered solitary through the world because he had not the companionship of God, her heart was grieved for him: for she knew him to be a right loyal gentleman, that would never forsake the accomplishment of his quest. Therefore she came to him, where he walked in that dark forest: and she gave him counsel that he should return to the holy hermit with the costrel he might not fill and confess his failure with humility, asking his help for that he grew old and weary in this pilgrimage.

When that knight heard the words that the glorious Virgin put into his heart, he was exceeding glad; and he turned back upon the road and went into his own country as quickly as he could, and to the cell of the hermit that lived yet amongst the rocks. And the hermit made for him right joyous welcome, as he did for all travellers that had need of it, though he knew him not for whom he was, because of his thinness and his sorry clothes. Verily, all the signs of his estate had long gone from him, and he seemed as some poor pilgrim that is glad to ask an alms. *The Knight of the Costrel*

But when that he made himself known, showing to the hermit his costrel into which no drop of water had yet come, then that good and holy man did recognise him indeed, and he gave thanks to Jesu Christ and to His glorious Mother with tears and clasped hands, because this penitent had returned in safety. Then made he the knight to sit down near him, and heard most gladly the life he had lived and how that he had been brought to discipline his flesh on this quest. And that knight told him all he had suffered, confessing very meekly that his penance was yet undone, for that no water would come into the costrel.

Then said the hermit to him, " Messire, know that by these griefs you have had you have gained great merit and great price. For you are quit for all your sins, in that you have borne this heavy penance of weariness and poverty, leaving your estate and honours for the getting

The Knight of the Costrel

of your salvation, the which God shall give you by His grace. And know that if hereafter you keep yourself at this point of virtue, you shall receive the crown of Paradise. Therefore may you now leave this costrel that you have carried with you, for I will give you another penance, the which shall be the ending of your grief."

But the knight, that had now a most ardent and an humble heart, and was altogether dedicate to God and to Our Lady, said to him:

"Nay, good father, this cannot be; for I will have no other penance while I live till this that was put on me for my sinfulness be done. Of a surety I may not leave a quest that is not ended; and I know that God will by His grace enable me to do it when my penitence is pleasing in His sight. Therefore when I have rested me and heard that which you would say for my admonishment, I will commend me to Saint Mary's guidance and go again into the world."

Then the hermit, exceeding joyful, praised God most heartily; and he spoke many comfortable words to the knight for his encouragement. And so did he do till at last the hour came when the penitent must depart from that cell and set himself upon the road again. So they made their farewells; and now the hermit wept greatly, being full of pity, and the knight wept also, for his heart was moved by Our Lady's grace so that he knew his evil state and had great grief of it. And he had still slung about him that costrel which he carried for his penance through the world.

The Knight of the Costrel

And it happened, by the sovereign mercy of Madame Saint Mary, and of her Son Jesu Christ, that one of his tears which he shed fell by chance within that costrel. Then God, Who hated him not—no, nor hateth any contrite sinner—did do for him great marvel: for that tear of penitence which he had shed so great did grow that it filled all the said costrel to the brim, and so his penance was accomplished before ever he set foot upon the road. When that knight saw this fair miracle greatly was he amazed, and he fell down upon the ground rendering thanks and praise to God and His Mother; and so also did that holy hermit, as indeed religion did enjoin. And the hermit took from him his costrel that now was full, and absolved him, saying:

"Go you back now to the world, and to your estate and to your wife; for by Our Lady's intercession you are made clean and shriven. And set you ever to well-doing in remembrance of the grace that Our Lord her Son hath here shown to you: for unto the tear of your penitence He hath added the ocean of His Love."

THE WINDOW OF PARADISE

HERE WE TELL HOW A CERTAIN SACRISTAN HAD GREAT COMFORT OF OUR LADY, BECAUSE OF THESE WORDS: COELI FENESTRA FACTA ES

The Window of Paradise

VERILY, it is a great matter to have Our Lady's friendship, and little need they fear that possess this sovereign grace; for neither man, nor the Enemy in Hell, nor the very Saints that are in Paradise can hurt them, so great a power and subtlety hath the glorious Virgin in her children's help and defence. And that ye may know somewhat of the manner in which she guards us, I will here set in writing the adventure of a certain poor Christian that was sacristan in the church of the Blessed Apostle Saint Peter that is in the city of Rome.

Now amongst the many offices wherewith this sacristan was charged, one devoir he had of great import, namely, to tend and nourish with pure oil the lamps that burned before the altars of the Saints; for these lamps should burn for ever with an unchanging light, being indeed the emblem of the Church's prayers. And because he had a special love for our dear Lady Saint Mary, this sacristan had exceeding care of the

The Window of Paradise

lamp that was before her altar, and trimmed it very often, and kept it always filled with oil and burning brightly. But one day it chanced that this lamp wanted for oil, so that its light grew dim and was like to be extinguished; and when he saw it he was much vexed, and cast about to see what he might do to replenish it as quickly as he could.

Now the lamp that burned before the shrine of the Blessed Apostle Saint Peter was full of oil even to the brim; and it burned with a great light, exceeding all other in the church. Therefore this sacristan, for that he was old and somewhat slothful, bethought him that he would take a little oil from Saint Peter's lamp, and therefrom replenish that of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the which was like to be extinguished. This he did, thinking no harm of it, for he held that even the Prince of the Apostles should find it a pleasant thing and just to give to God's Mother those things of which she stood in need. And not on this day only, but on many others, he fed the lamp of his Lady from out the superfluity of oil which Saint Peter's suppliants offered at his shrine.

Nevertheless, that holy Apostle was greatly vexed at it; for he was of opinion that in this church, wherein his confession was, he stood higher than all other saints, yea, even than the Queen of Angels herself. And he could not endure that the oil of his lamp should be taken in order that a brighter flame might burn before that Lady's shrine. Therefore one night he

came from Paradise and appeared in vision before that sacristan whiles he slept, and with angry looks he saith to him : *The Window of Paradise*

"Wherefore, oh sacristan, have you taken the oil from my lamp? Is it for this that my shrine has been given into your keeping?"

Said the sacristan, "Messire Saint Peter, I did but borrow a little that the lamp of Our Lady Saint Mary might be fed."

The Apostle replied, "God's Mother hath much honour in many lands, and many shrines and pilgrimages there are established in her name: but this is my house, wherein my body lies, that is the very Rock on which the Church is built, and here I can in no wise suffer that you do the Lady Mary this courtesy at my expense. Oil has been provided wherewith to light her altar, and this must suffice. Here am I accustomed to be honoured above all other saints, and ill shall it be for them that fail to give me my due. Behold, I keep the key of Heaven, and none can enter in save them to whom I open; and if you be so hardy to come thither, that have given me less oil that the Blessed Virgin may have more, very surely I shall shut the door in your face."

Then the sacristan awoke, full of dread, and he rose up swiftly and went into the church; and there he made haste to tend the lamp of the Blessed Apostle Saint Peter and show him every courtesy he could. But little hope did he have of it, for he knew him to be a hasty and a vengeful man.

The Window of Paradise

And when he had done all he might for Saint Peter's lamp, then did he give oil to the one that burned before Saint Mary's altar, and, "Ah, dearest Lady," he said, "how dearly have I paid for my love! For the Blessed Apostle Saint Peter is very wrathful because I have dared to prefer your service before his; and since I have earned his enmity, he will not open the door of Heaven to let me in. Alas, Madame, what shall I do? Because of my devotion I am like to be damned, for very surely none shall enter Paradise that have not the goodwill of him that keeps the keys."

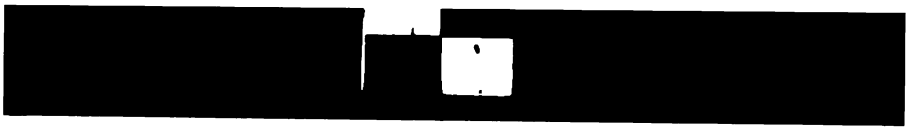
But behold, that night as he lay on his bed, Madame Saint Mary came and stood beside that poor sacristan, and spoke comfortable words to him, saying:

"My very dear friend and faithful servant, be joyful and fear not, for none can harm you whiles you have my love. Therefore continue firmly in all that you have aforetime done, honouring me at my altar and tending my lamp before all else. If this you do, greatly shall it profit you; for though the Apostle Saint Peter refuse to open the door of Heaven to let you in, yet is he powerless to keep you from the Celestial City so long as you do call upon my name. Very truly he keeps the keys of the door of Paradise, but so soon as he hath shut it against you, I, of whom my anthem saith, "Coeli fenestra facta es," shall open the window, that thereby you may come in. This will I ever do for my friends that fail not in my service; for

the door of Heaven is a very narrow gate, and Saint Peter keepeth it exceeding straitly, but the window of my love is very wide."

The Window of Paradise

Then was the poor sacristan greatly comforted by the words that the Queen of Heaven had said; and he rose up full of joy to give her thanks, repeating much devoutly the anthem that was an earnest of her grace. Ever after he tended her lamp before all others, so that it burned day and night with exceeding splendour, the brightest in all that church. No heed did he give to the wrath that the Blessed Apostle Saint Peter might feel at it, that was so greatly jealous for the honour of his shrine; for he knew that all the Saints that are in Paradise, yea, and the very hosts of highest Heaven, are powerless to do hurt to those poor Christians that do serve God's Mother zealously and with love.



STELLA MARIS

HERE ARE TOLD CERTAIN FAIR MIRACLES THAT OUR LADY SAINT MARY DID UPON THE SEA

HE that would know and understand how God's Mother doth keep and defend her loving children, let him consider in his heart the great mercies she hath done for them that adventure in ships upon the sea. For verily, as the Psalmist saith, "Qui descendunt mare in navibus, facientes operationem in aquis multis, ipsi viderunt opera Domini, et mirabilia ejus in profundo." *Stella Maris*

It is told that on a time an abbot and certain other folk were in a ship upon the British seas, making voyage from England unto France ; and when they were a great way from land, a tempest arose exceeding fierce and put them in great peril, so that they feared their ship must break in two and they be drowned. And night came upon them very dark and full of dread, for there was no moon ; neither did the storm abate with the darkness, but rather grew in power. Then, because they knew not what should befall, for that they were altogether at the mercy of the wind that blew them whither it would, all

Stella Maris

that company set themselves to call upon the Saints of Paradise; for indeed there was nothing else that they could do. And each, according to his devotion, made his prayer to them; one crying, "Surely Saint Nicholas will help us, that did great things for mariners in their distress;" and another, "Let us call on Saint Clare, that she may give us light." And many said, "Nay, pray rather to Saint Christopher, that is right powerful upon the waters; for did he not bear God in safety through the floods?" And one and all they promised many fair gifts and candles to their patrons, if that they would bring them safely to shore; yet still the tempest raged exceeding fierce and decreased not, so that all these poor people were tossed most cruelly upon the waves, and were in much misery and dread.

Then said that abbot their fellow traveller, the which was a discreet and holy man: "My fair friends, I marvel much that you should make your orisons to these Saints that are so little powerful, and that you forget to call first upon our Blessed Lady Saint Mary, for no other Saint hath so great a power to help us, and no tempest can long endure in that place where her name is heard. I say not that you do ill to entreat the other Saints, for they, no doubt, will aid you if they can; but certainly you would do better still to confide your business to that glorious Virgin, for she is the help of the helpless and Star of the Sea."

When they heard the good abbot speak thus, all, both men and women, set themselves to

pray to the Mother of Mercy with great fervour of supplication ; crying aloud and saying, " Most noble Lady, fair Queen of Heaven, have mercy on your poor children, we beseech you ! Dear Mother of our gentle Saviour that did walk in safety on the waves, will you not succour us in our extremity ? Verily, if you help us not, we must be drowned ; and we know that you can save us if you will." *Stella Maris*

And the abbot himself, though he was so sick and feeble that no more could he bear, in that during two whole days he had eaten only an apple, began to sing that respond of the Blessed Virgin which begins, " Felix namque es, Virgo Maria ut omni laude ! " And all they that were in the ship sang with him, so that the sound of their voices was greater than the cry of the wind.

And lo ! when this song was partly done, all saw a great marvel, to wit, a fair candle or waxen taper, in the manner of those that are set before the altars of the Saints, descending full quickly out of heaven. And this taper shone with a bright light exceeding wondrous, and it came and rested upon the mast and there did stay, lighting all the ship most sweetly, as the sun might do, and chasing away the shades of night from round it. And when that fair celestial light did shine upon the sea, lo ! of a sudden the tempest was altogether stilled, so that the waves, which had been so great that it seemed as if each one might drown the world, rose not, neither did the wind buffet them to and fro ;

Stella Maris

but the ship lay full quietly upon the waters, and by that blessed taper, the which left them not till day came, it was kept and guided till it came safely to the haven where it would be.

Then had all those voyagers great joy because of the fair miracle Our Lady had done for them; and they gave her thanks most heartily, and offered many candles at her altar in remembrance of that torch which had lit them in the darkness and driven the tempest from their path. And the good abbot had this history put in writing, for the comfort of all mariners and pilgrims; that they might know how that Madame Saint Mary is truly *Stella Maris*, and day and night doth lead and keep her children that voyage upon the waters of the world.

To the same intent hear this history. A company of pilgrims there was that took ship at Venice to go to the Holy Sepulchre of Jesu Christ our Lord. And when they were on the high seas far from land, a mighty and an evil wind arose, by the which they were driven from their path and much hurt was done to the ship they were in; so that presently, when the tempest was gone, they found that there was a great breach made in the hull of it, by which the sea entered in full quickly, and it was like to founder and be lost. Then the master, that was a very prudent man, seeing that nought he could do might save the ship, the which was indeed near foundering, let launch a little boat; and he took therein a bishop that was of his company, and

several other pilgrims, men of substance and consideration. But he said nothing of the danger they were in, inviting them only that they should take a little row upon the sea whilst they tarried for a favourable wind. *Stella Maris*

And because the ship rolled somewhat with the motion of the waves, it happened that one of the said pilgrims missed his footing as he descended into the little boat, and fell into the abyss of the sea; and for nothing that they could do might they save him, for he sank straitway into the deeps. And they grieved greatly for it, for they had loved him well; nevertheless the master waited not, but when he saw that this poor man indeed was lost, full hastily he pushed off from the great ship. And when he had gone a little way, being yet within earshot, he stayed and cried to those pilgrims and mariners he had left behind, and told them how that they were very near to death; for the ship must sink, and nothing could he do for them, in that there was no more room in the little boat. And he exhorted them that they should think each upon his conscience, imploring the mercy of Almighty God.

Ah! how piteous a thing it was to hear the cries and lamentations of those unfortunates when they knew the danger they were in! Nevertheless, being pious folk and well advised, full swiftly they stilled their complaints, and set themselves to confess their sins one to another very humbly: and when so they had done, they

Stella Maris

commended themselves to the care of Our Lord and Our Lady with great fervour of love. But little time did they have wherein to make their orisons, for very soon they that were in the little boat saw the great ship break asunder with rending sounds exceeding grievous and go down suddenly into the deep, and all those pilgrims with it; at the which sight they that were saved had great sorrow and dole in their hearts. And the bishop, that was a very good and compassionate man, wept exceeding sore, seeing his comrades thus destroyed; and he prayed most heartily to Jesu Christ the sweet and merciful, and to His Blessed Mother Lady Mary, that they would have pity on these pilgrims that were drowned whilst seeking the Holy Sepulchre for their souls' health. And he watched the sea a long while, lest any floated upon it that yet lived; for he desired to save them if he could.

And lo! whilst so he did, presently by the grace of the Holy Spirit that bishop saw a sight most fair and wondrous; to wit, great company of white doves, that came up out of the midst of the waters, here two, here three, there five, there ten; and all these having come together in a great cloud, they flew up to heaven. Then he gave thanks rejoicing, for well he knew that these were the souls of the good pilgrims, the which, while they sought the earthly Jerusalem, had found the straight way to Heavenly Syon; and he grieved also, repenting and reproaching himself in that he had not remained with them

in the ship that had brought them to so sweet an haven. *Stella Maris*

"Ah, Jesu Christ!" said he, "Fair and dear God! It is plain that my life is but little pleasing unto you; for were it so, very surely you would not have left me to toss thus upon the perilous waters whilst my companions are taken to yourself." And he said, "Quis dabit mihi pennas sicut columbae, et volabo, et requiescam? For little need man desire to be left here below, where all is as unstable as the ocean; but he who flies above shall come to the port of Heaven there to dwell for ever in tranquillity."

And after this, that bishop and his companions floated fifteen days upon the waters, in great misery and wretchedness; but at last by Our Lady's help they came to land. And behold! when they were come out of the boat and stood upon the shore, there they found that pilgrim their comrade that had fallen into the sea as he descended from the great ship to join them. Then all marvelled exceedingly to see him thus safe and sound upon the beach, for they made sure he had been drowned. And many thought it was a spirit, so that they adjured him in God's Name to tell them if indeed it were he, laying hold upon his garments and entreating him that he would speak: but when that he answered them, and they were assured that he lived, then were they altogether amazed, and they did kiss and embrace him with much joy and thanksgiving.

Stella Maris

And the bishop said, "Verily it is meet and just that we should give thanks to that Lady, the Star of the Sea, in whose keeping all pilgrims do stand; for this is her handiwork."

Said the pilgrim, "Messire, you speak truth; for Saint Mary it is that hath upheld me in the waters and brought me safely to this shore."

Then said the bishop, "Tell us, I pray you, my brother, what befell you when you were cast into the sea? For you went down straitway into the abyss, so that we thought you dead, for we could not see you any more."

Answered the pilgrim, "Small marvel is therein; for verily we know that Our Lady can save her servants from the very pains of Hell. Therefore most easily can she succour them from the perils of the sea."

The bishop replied, "I doubt it not, for I am assured that the Mother of God can do all things. Nevertheless, we are greatly impatient to know by what road and in what manner she brought you here; for fifteen days have passed since that you fell into the waters, in the which you can have had neither meat nor drink."

Said the pilgrim, "I have neither hunger nor thirst."

"By the Rood!" said the bishop; "great favour have you had! I pray you tell us, if you can, how it has chanced."

Said the pilgrim, "When I fell from the ship, and saw below me the great gulf of the sea, I called upon Our Lady, *Stella Maris*, and did entreat her help with all my heart. But so

quickly I fell, that no other saint could I invoke; neither did I pray to her Son, for there was no time. Nevertheless, so soon as I was in the waters, Madame Saint Mary came to me exceeding swiftly, and very gently she did wrap me in her mantle, so that the waves touched me not at all. And when that I felt those folds around me, I had no more fear. And that sweet and glorious Virgin carried me under her cloak through the midst of the waters; and she brought me in safety to this shore where now I am, in the same moment wherein your boat did come to land." *Stella Maris*

Then the bishop, being full of awe, knelt down upon the beach and gave thanks to the Blessed Virgin, saying, "Sweet Lady, Saint Mary, most piteous Maiden, verily, neither in Heaven nor earth is there any that shall call on you in vain! For so soon as you hear the cry of your children, very speedily you come to their help, and wrap the mantle of your mercy around them, by the which they are preserved from every grief."

Of a surety, Our Lady's mantle hath great virtue for the protection of them that are sheltered therein; no peril shall come near to that traveller about whom it is cast. Thus did it happen on a time that certain clerks were in a galley on the sea, making passage to a shrine where they would go; and a great tempest arose, by the which they were put in much danger, for so high was the wind that they could not row at all, but were compelled to let drift

Stella Maris

the galley whither it led them. Now these were lettered men, expert in Latin; therefore, being in much need of Our Lady's protection, they began to sing her hymn, that is called "Ave, Maris Stella," with a very great devotion. And they were in much dread, for the waves were exceeding great; yet had they trust in Saint Mary's power.

Then was their faith justified unto them, for when they were come to the words, "Monstra te esse Matrem!" behold! they saw our compassionate Mother, that is the Queen of Heaven and Earth, who came to them upon the waters; and whilst they gazed upon her beauty, she took from her fair shoulders the Mantle of Mercy, and spread it as a veil about the galley that was in such distress. And at once there was a great calm, for no tempests nor foul winds may come therein.

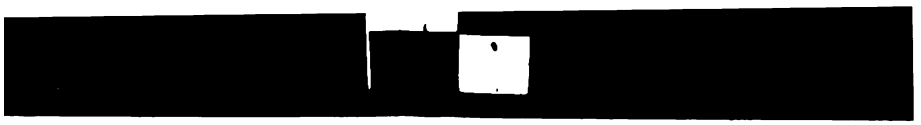
Then said the master of the ship, "Row, brothers, row, lest the storm come on us again!" And so did they do, and that Lady conducting them, and keeping them ever under the shelter of her love, they came quickly to land in great peace and joy, praising and lauding that Blessed Virgin, the Star of the Sea, and the Helper of Christian folk.

Verily, there is no sinner so great that Saint Mary will not shelter him in the mantle of her mercy if he ask it; nor is there any so virtuous that he may do without its aid. Let us fly quickly, oh my brother! beneath the cloak of that compassionate Lady, that there we

may be safe from every peril, and sheltered against the righteous anger of the Judge. And let us make our humble petition to that glorious Virgin, saying devoutly : *Stella Maris*

" Dear Lady, Star of the Sea, without thee our ship wanders helpless upon the troublous waters of the world ! Send, we beseech thee, fair winds to fill our sails, that swiftly we may achieve that comfortable haven that thy Son hath prepared for them that adventure on the seas : even the joyous port of Heavenly Syon, where no storms nor tempests ever come.

" Placa mare, Maris Stella,
Ne involvet nos procella,
Vel tempestas obvia ! "



THE EYES OF THE BLIND

THE MIRACLE OF A GENTLEWOMAN TO WHOM GOD'S MOTHER DID RESTORE THE SIGHT OF HER EYES

The Eyes of the Blind

IN the city of Roc Amadour there was of old time established a right solemn pilgrimage of Our Lady unto the abbey-church of that place. There was her shrine set up, that was exceeding rich with gifts and treasure, and many fair miracles were done therein.

Now it happened on a time that a certain gentlewoman of the country side, a very fair and gracious lady, did lose the sight of her eyes; for the which cause she was full of grief, as well might be. Alas! thus does it ofttimes befall them that abuse what they have; for this lady was a person of much beauty, comely and debonair, that greatly did misuse her gifts, in that being subject to vanity she governed herself so ill that her life was an evil ensample, a stumbling-block to many and displeasing to God. Therefore did He take her sight from her, because she had used it but foolishly, gazing upon worldly gauds and never looking on the light divine.

But when she found that she must live in darkness, this gentlewoman was greatly penitent

The Eyes of the Blind

for the many follies she had done: and being moved to put her trust in the infinite pity of the Virgin Mary, she vowed herself entirely to that Lady, and prayed to her most heartily, promising to amend her ways if that she might have her sight again. And being advised by a priest of her township, she undertook to make pilgrimage upon her feet to Roc Amadour, a long way and weary: and many of her neighbours went with her, for they were grieved for her misfortune, and hoped she might get great good of that pilgrimage. Thus they went altogether, a day's journey, and when they had come within sight of the abbey-church, that is to the place that is called Mont Joye, because here the pilgrim's happiness begins, they stayed for to ask the blessing of God and Our Lady on the adventure; and all kneeling down right humbly on the earth, they made their devotions, saying the *Salve Regina* and *Ave Maria*, as their hearts did move them to do. And the neighbours called this lady that was blind by her name, and said to her that now she should have good cheer for her sorrow was nearly done, in that they were come within sight of Roc Amadour, and of Our Lady's shrine.

Then, when she heard this, that poor gentlewoman began to weep exceeding sore, and to call upon the Blessed Virgin Mary, saying, "Sweet and most piteous Lady! I entreat you by your holy name, and that of your dear Son that did have mercy on the blind to heal them, that you will look favourably on this poor

sinner, the which is both sad and suffering. Most glorious Lady, I know well that if you grant it me, I may regain my sight; for I am assured that in this your renown lies not. Ah, give me my sight again, dear Queen of Heaven, and I vow that from this day forth I will amend my life, and do all things that be pleasing unto you."

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No sooner had she said those words of penitence, than great light came to that lady, the which had stood in darkness so long; for the glorious Virgin gave to her her sight again, and never in all her life had she seen more clearly. Then she began to cry with a loud voice, for she was exceeding glad and full of amazement, saying, "Dear Saint Mary! I see clear! Lady, Lady, I give you great thanks, for I know that I am altogether vile and have done nought that might deserve this sovereign grace." And gazing with much devotion on the shrine of Roc Amadour that was before them, she said also, "Levavi oculos meos in montes, unde veniet auxilium mihi" with many other devout psalms and lauds.

Then all the folk her neighbours that were with her cried out with joy, weeping because of the marvel they had seen; and they ran before, that they might tell the miracle to all the pilgrims that were on the road. And these came also, great company, hastening that they might see the lady for whom the Queen of Angels had done this kindliness: and all did gaze upon her, praising God and His Mother the while. So

The Eyes of the Blind

did they go, till that they were come to the precincts of the church; and they would enter by the great door into the nave, that they might go to the chapel of the Virgin and make their orisons without delay.

But when that gentlewoman came to the church door, lo! she could in no wise enter it; at which she marvelled much, and so did her neighbours, and they let press and compel her to pass the threshold, but she could not do it for anything that might be. And at last, when many efforts they had made, she said to them that they must cease from it, for they did but hurt her body by their travail. "For well do I know," said she, "that hands which we see not keep me from this door, and nought that you can do will make me to pass it."

And so it was, for though all the world had put its strength to the test, yet could they not have made this lady to enter God's House; for I would have you to know that she was unshriven, and till that she had made her confession her sins, that were many, held her back.

Therefore after a while, her friends went into the church and left her where she stood alone outside the door: and they took counsel one with another, and also with the priests of the place, what were best to do. Then said the priests that very surely the Devil had power over this lady's body, to keep it from the House of God. Therefore it were convenient that she be confessed there where she stood, for until she should repent her of her sins and be absolved, very certainly

she might not come within the church to do her devoir, namely, to give thanks to Our Lady of Roc Amadour for the mercy she had nad. And one of them, that was a discreet and zealous man, went out to the porch in his surplice to hear her confession; the which she did make full humbly, telling all her life that she had led and the many follies of it word by word, and how that by reason of her vanity she had led divers men to evil conversation and vile desires, grievously sinning against God. *The Eyes of the Blind*

And when this priest had looked upon her, that was indeed a very comely lady, having her head adorned exceeding sweetly with hair of golden colour, soft fine and plenteous beyond all measure :

"My dear sister," said he, "I am very sure that by these fair tresses of yours you have done great hurt to many souls, for all to whom you have shown them have desired you. And indeed such twisted locks and vain delights are but a snare of the Enemy, for though your head were apparelled with pure gold, yet had God preferred that you should wear the ornament of modesty. Therefore I charge you, if you would be shriven of your sins, that you let cut off these fair locks that have been so great an hindrance to your soul, and do make offering of them in honour of God and His Mother, giving thanks because your blindness has been healed. For when you are delivered from the bondage of vanity, very surely you shall see with a ghostly sight, that is with the eye of the soul, whereby we apprehend

The Eyes of the Blind

celestial things. Then may you enter the church to make your thanksgiving, and the fruit of your penitence shall be greatly acceptable to God."

The lady, being in great fear because of the miracle, and desiring also to be shriven lest her blindness come on her again, durst not withhold herself from this penance that was put on her; but she was exceeding displeased in her heart, for her hair was the greatest treasure that she had, and she was little minded to go all her days coiffed in the manner of a nun, the which became her not at all. But little time did she have to ponder the matter, for scissors being brought, straitway her confessor cut the hair from off her head, so that nought remained of it to please the eye; and when it was done he caused it to be carried to that place within the church where are exposed the tresses of those women that desire salvation, as also the fetters of freed captives and other matters of like kind. And the gentlewoman having received absolution, behold! she entered most easily into the church where before she might not come, and led by her confessor did go to the shrine of the glorious Virgin, where, taught by him, she made her thank-offering, and also recited many prayers. But her heart was exceeding sore for the loss of her tresses, for she saw that her neighbours looked curiously upon her, the which she liked not.

Then when she had done, she went with the other pilgrims to an inn for to dine; and all that were there gave her joy of the miracle, but little joy was in that lady's soul. And after dinner

they set forth again by the road by which they had come, for they would reach home before night fell: and as they went upon the way, this gentlewoman, being no more in the church but having her face set toward the world, was full sorrowful thinking on her beautiful hair that she had left behind her, and how that when she came home they that had desired her would know her not because she was shorn. And she grieved much for that being full of fear and dread she had so easily been spoiled of this her treasure. Thus did she do and thus go, till they came again to the hill that is called Mont Joye, where first they had seen Roc Amadour and the comfortable vision of Our Lady's church. There they stayed one for another, that those who lingered might not be left behind; and kneeling down upon the earth they made each their farewells to our sweet Lady, saying the *Ave Maria.*

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But this gentlewoman, that had had so great a mercy, thanked her not at all, but cried with a loud voice and woeful, saying:

"Alas, Saint Mary, what have you done to me? Behold, I came to you apparelled in much beauty, and you have robbed me of that which I loved: and now my heart has great dole because of the fair tresses I have left with you, and therefore I cannot be at peace."

And lo! so soon as she had spoken, great marvel came on all that company; for in that instant, her hair that had been cut from off her came to her again, quicker than eye could close

The Eyes of the Blind

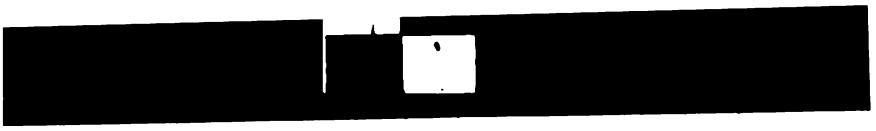
or open, and straitway her head was set about with golden tresses that fell in twisted locks to her waist, as fair as had ever been. But little joy did she have of it, for in that same moment the sight of her eyes that Our Lady had restored was taken from her; and she stood in great darkness, nor could ever see again the golden hair that she so greatly loved. For Saint Mary taketh not a grudging gift; nor doth she bestow her mercies on them that dispute with her the price of their relief, desiring the pleasures of the world along with the blessing of Heaven.

And when the neighbours that were with this lady saw the miracle, they were full of amazement; but nought could they do for her, for well they knew that this was the judgment of God. And they led her to her home, and to her friends, and told them all the adventure, and the news of it ran through all the country, for indeed it was a very wondrous thing. And though much prayers were made to God and to His Mother, yet that gentlewoman got little good of it but stayed ever in the darkness to which she was returned; for little would it avail to restore the sight of the eyes to them that have the blindness of the soul.

Now this history should be a most precious ensample to all ladies, the which are greatly inclined to the sin of vanity, desiring in their folly to make show in the world and turn hearts from God by their fair appearance. These do search and find out how they may get false joys

of their comely faces, taking pride in their curled tresses and fair skins, that are but a fleeting gaud agreeable to the eye of sense. But the eyes of the wise do rather seek to apprehend a spiritual beauty, that is a perdurable treasure most pleasing in the sight of God.

The Eyes of the Blind



THE LITTLE CLERK

HERE WE TELL HOW THE CHILD OF A POOR WOMAN GAVE HIS CAKE TO OUR LADY'S CHILD

The Little Clerk

THERE was upon a time a certain bishop of the city of Spires, the which had an exceeding love for little children; and because he was of opinion that none was too small nor too simple for God's service, he would have these little ones brought to him full early, that they might be clerked and set to sing the Office of the Church. Thus it was that in his cathedral young canons there were that knew not their letters nor scarce how to say Amen, and many little clerks that had prayed better at their mothers' knee than in the stalls of the choir. But because they were of his kindred, the bishop considered not their shortcomings, which indeed were many, for barely did they know how to comport themselves mannerly, much less how the Psalter should be sung. Yea, pardoning their errors of Latinity, he loved to hear his little ones sing the Hours as best they could, holding that the Holy Child would Himself look gently on their childishness.

Now there was amongst them one very little

The Little Clerk

boy, the child of a poor woman, a widow; and he was a clerk of the cathedral, and came every day in his surplice to walk in the procession of the singers. But he was so small a child that he could not rightly understand the service of God; therefore, when the Office began, he would go very often from the choir and play alone in the cathedral aisles whiles his brothers, that were lettered, said their prayers. And specially he loved to be in one place, namely, the ambulatory that goes behind the screens of the choir; for here he had a friend that ever waited him, to wit, Our Lady's Child, as I shall tell.

Now in this place there was a very ancient image of the Blessed Virgin Mary, that held Our Lord, that is her Baby, in her arms; and it stood in a corner niche, close to the ground, where all might come near it. And I would have you to know that this image had been once of an exceeding price and beauty, and for long time had been bestowed in a chapel, greatly worshipped, and made rich with candles and with votive gifts. But because it was now grown old, blackened with the smoke of many torches, and the fair colours that had been on it were altogether worn away, it had seemed to the people of that city to be no longer of a splendour befitting their cathedral-church. Therefore had it been taken from its altar, and stayed now in this corner, where few passed by but clerks going on their business from the sacristy to the choir. And none heeded it, for there was a finer and a newer image in the Lady Chapel, painted in the

very colours of life; before this the townsfolk made their orisons, and the old, worn Virgin was forgot. Nevertheless, this image had still the high and golden crown that had been given her in the days when many prayed to her; but the Child that she carried wore only the kingship of infancy. *The Little Clerk*

The little clerk came often to the dark corner where this Lady stood alone, and there he would talk to that other Child, and invite Him to play and bear him company; and though this Friend of his would answer never, yet he came gradually to love Him, and desire His comradeship and love. And he would say within himself as he came to the church, "Perhaps my fellow will speak with me to-day."

Now there came a day when a great feast was held, and all the clergy and singers and the burgesses and their wives came to the cathedral, and High Mass was sung with great solemnity. The little clerk came also, but because of the great press of clergy he could not find place for himself in the choir: so he wandered to the ambulatory, and, said he, "Perhaps my fellow will play with me to-day and I will give him of my cake to eat." For his mother had given him for his dinner a feast-cake, such as are sold in fairs, and this he was eating as he went through the church, and to the corner wherein the image stood.

Then he looked up and saw the worn face of God's Mother that gazed at him from her niche, and the Baby that was in her arms; and it seemed to him that whiles much orison

The Little Clerk

was made in the choir to some God that he knew not, this Lady and her Child were very lonely, and had little joy in the feast. Then the little clerk, that was but a simple child, came to the feet of that image, as he might have done to his mother's feet, and he spoke as he was used to do to the Christ-child that was his Friend. And he offered Him a piece of cake, saying:

"Taste, little Baby, of my dinner; for you are welcome." And he broke off a bit from the cake and put it within the hand of the Holy Child, saying again, "Eat, little one!"

But when he saw how that his Friend neither answered nor ate of the cake, that little clerk was so greatly disappointed that he began to cry; and he reached up and put his arm about the neck of the Christ-child, as children do to one another in love, saying, "What is the matter, good fellow, that you will never speak with me nor play with me? Wilt not have my cake? Canst not speak?" For he thought within himself, "Perhaps such a very little boy had not yet learned to speak."

Then did he take comfort, considering in his mind how that doubtless so small a Baby refrained not from any unkindness, but rather because He understood not what was said, nor ate, unless of pap or broth. Therefore said he to Him, as his nurse might have do:

"Suck, pretty Boy, this pap."

And this he said to see if he were understood, putting a soft crumb from the dough of his cake to the lips of the Holy Child.

"Yes, eat, dear Baby, in faith, God helping you," he said, "for I fear You may die of hunger if You eat not. Taste, then, a little of my dinner, for truly it is very good, and afterward we may play together if You will. I see well that there be none here to care for You nor feed You; therefore will I do so if God will be my helper." *The Little Clerk*

Then did God do great miracle; for Our Lady Saint Mary spoke by the mouth of this her image, and she said to her Son:

"Fair Son, what recompense shall be given to this little child for his cake, the which he hath freely given to You? Shall You not eat with him as he hath asked You, and be his good fellow in love?"

And at once the child that was held in her arms replied to her, saying: "Dear and sweet Mother, I know that this little clerk would serve Me well if he could; for during all the years wherein I have rested in this place, and have received the prayers of those that call upon Me, none before has given Me to eat, save only this little boy, who has said, 'Taste of my cake, little one.' Sweet Mother, here I may not eat with him nor play with him, but I say unto you that in three days this child shall come to Me in Paradise, and there we shall dine together, and I will give to him a crown exceeding glorious; and never before has he tasted such meat as that which he shall share with Me then."

Then said Our Lady to the little boy: "Dear my child, you have heard the words that my

The Little Clerk

Lord and Son hath said: therefore keep them well in mind, for in three days you shall most surely come to my Son and to me, and I will receive you and cherish you full sweetly, for I am the Mother of all children that give to one another in love. Now go you to your mother, and tell her all that I have said to you, and lie down upon your bed with thankfulness, for my Son calls you to a better place, and there He waits His brother, and I with Him, and He shall give you of a bread sweet as honey whereon you shall dine."

Said the little clerk, "Right gladly will I come to my fellow and dine with Him, what day soever it please Him best; but shall not my mother come too?"

The Blessed Virgin replied to him, "She is not ready for that dinner, but afterward she shall come."

Then the little clerk went out from the cathedral, and he returned to his home and lay upon his bed. And his mother said to him:

"Why have you come from the church in the midst of the feast?"

"Mother," said the little boy, "be not wrathful, for I must lay me on my bed with patience, because the image of Our Lady has spoken with me and ordained it, and so has my fellow, that is her Child. And they said unto me that in three days I should go hence that I may dine with Him, and then I shall be lodged in Paradise, for so the image of Saint Mary has willed. And I long greatly," he said, "to be

again with that little Child, and to play with Him and He with me, for I love Him; and I know that it shall be so, for already my head begins to hurt me very much, and I am sure that I must die." *The Little Clerk*

Saith his mother: "My sweet boy, say you truly that the image has spoken with you?"

"Yes, mother, doubt it not; even that old image of which none take heed, the same that stands in the niche behind the choir."

Then that mother ran in haste to the cathedral-church, and to the image; and there she saw the Holy Child that held still the piece of cake He had received from her little son. And by this was she shown the truth of that which she had heard; and she came back much sorrowful to her child where he lay on his bed. And for three days she tended him in his sickness, but he mended not.

And on the morning of the third day, as she sat beside him, she saw our most gracious Lady, even the glorious Virgin Mary Queen of Angels, crowned and vested in the manner of that image by the which she had spoken to the little clerk. And this most sweet Lady came and stood by the bedside, and said to the child:

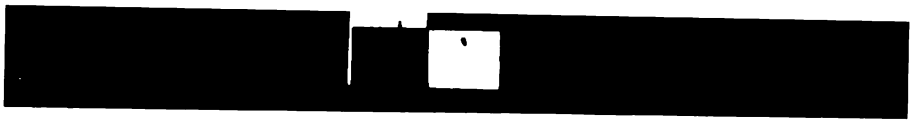
"Come, little son, your Brother awaits you; for you are made one of His family, in that you have freely and lovingly given of that which was yours. Even now He looks for your coming, that you may eat together in Paradise the banquet He hath set for all His friends."

Then did Our Lady receive right tenderly

The Little Clerk

the soul of the little boy, and bore it with her to Paradise; and his mother went forth weeping much bitterly for that she had lost her child, and told the matter to her priest. And because of the miracle they took the body of the little clerk and laid it in the cathedral-church with great and joyous ceremony; and the miracle was fairly writ and put in authority, for the comfort and encouragement of all faithful folk.

But who is there that can truly write or say all the grace and kindness of that Virgin Mother, Mater Purissima, Janua Coeli; even she that disdains not the gifts of the little children of the poor nor the love of simple men? Verily hath he chosen wisely who hath chosen this best and sweetest Friend!



THE CHRISTIAN'S SURETY

HOW A CHRISTIAN OF BYZANCE DID BORROW FROM A JEW AND GAVE OUR LORD TO BE HIS PLEDGE

The Christian's Surety

SO many things there are that must be told concerning the sweet miracles that Our Lady hath done, that I know not which to choose first. Therefore must I do as those that search for wild flowers in the fields; the which, seeing so many and diverse blossoms on every side, of red, white, golden and all fair colours, are fain for lack of time to pluck those that come first, waiting not to order them according to their several kinds. And thus will I do with those flowers of courtesy, the miracles that God's Mother hath wrought for our relief.

Therefore I will now tell of a merchant that dwelt in the great city of Byzance, of whom it is written that he greatly loved Our Blessed Lady. His name was Theodore. He had great wealth and honourable estate, living in splendour in a right fair mansion of that town. Every day his house was open to all that came; and he would have his friends ever about him, feasting and making merry, and gave great largess to them that asked it. Nor did he

The Christian's Surety

forget the poor, but made himself their friend, and was ever ready to relieve all that were distressed.

But so quick was this merchant at spending, and of so liberal a mind, that at last all his wealth was done; for that he made so many gifts to his friends and kindred and never would send empty away them that were in need. And at last he was brought to such straits that he must sell his lands; and when the gold he had of them was gone also, he set himself to borrow of his friends. But whatever they lent him he straitway spent again, nor could he refuse any that asked him an alms; so that he repaid his debt never. Therefore it came that after a while his friends would not lend to him any more, for though he had bestowed great benefit on them when that he was wealthy, little were they minded to bring themselves to poverty for his sake. Verily, he who borrows and pays not again hath soon lost his credit; yea, even though he be King of France.

Now was Theodore greatly troubled, for he was in much poverty and knew not what to do. He could not have his friends about him, for he might not feast them; nor could he give to the poor as he had been accustomed to do. And he was exceeding sorrowful that he might no longer give to any man, for he delighted in liberality. His friends turned from him and left him solitary, because he had so melancholy a mien, and that having fallen into poverty he

could no longer make them good cheer; and for this he was in great misery. *The Christian's Surety*

And because it seemed that all had forsaken him, even God, and he knew not what to do, he went at last to a Jew that was an usurer, named Abraham, the richest in Byzance. And he demanded of the Jew that he should lend him money, that therewith he might go trading.

"For," said he, "all have forsaken me; friends, kindred and all those for whom I have given my riches, and something I must do, for that I am left in great poverty. But it is known that I am a merchant of skill and knowledge; therefore, if you will lend me the gold that I need, so well shall I cause it to increase by my trading that you will get great gain of it."

Abraham said to him, "This may well be; and most willingly shall I lend you all that you need if you will give me a surety for your debt."

"Fair and sweet friend," replied Theodore, "if, as I tell you, all have gone from me, friends, servants, kindred, and all those to whom I made gifts, how then can I give you a surety? For nought remains to me in all the world save my faith and my truth, the which I most willingly give you in pledge."

Said the Jew, "If this be all, I can lend you nothing; for little will faith and truth avail in the place of my gold, should you lose it."

"Fair brother," said Theodore, "if indeed a pledge you must have, then take in surety, I

The Christian's Surety

pray you, my God in whom I trust, even Jesu Christ my Redeemer, King of Kings and Lord of Lords, Whom our most Blessed Lady, ever Virgin, did bear to heal our sin. For I will swear to you, oh Abraham my friend, by God and by His dear and sweet Mother Saint Mary, that if I repay not my debt on the day that you shall name in the bond, then will I give myself wholly into your hands, that you may sell my body into slavery or do with me what you will."

Abraham replied to him, "I believe not that Jesu the Son of Mary was ever God: but because He was a good prophet and just, and because you seem to me a man of honour and good heart, I will lend to you on His image and on that of His Mother whatsoever you desire. And if you make default, then shall you be my chattel, and I shall sell you into bondage for the repayment of your debt."

On these words, the merchant and the usurer went together to the church of the Virgin Mary that was in that city, and there in the presence of many witnesses, both Jew and Christian, clerk and lay, Theodore fell on his face before the image of Our Dolorous Lady that was therein, that holds her crucified Son upon her knees and shows His wounds to all the world; and he cried to her with tears, saying:

"Most merciful Lady, because my poverty is great, I have now no other helper left but you: but I know that you are the friend of the poor, and therefore in you and in your Son I

do put all my trust. And I make my prayer to you, that you will help me, and will intercede with Him that He may be surety for this my debt." *The Christian's Surety*

Then when he had made this orison, he stood up, and took the hand of the Crucified Whom Our Lady held in her arms, and said :

"Friend Abraham, here is my pledge : for by the help of our glorious Lady, I give you as gage her Son Jesu Christ, Who did make and create me, and by His Death did deliver me from Hell. Better pledge you could not have; for thus hath God Himself become my surety."

Thereon he did place the wounded hand of Our Lord within that of the Jew, that the pledge might be duly sworn; and when he had so done he kneeled down anew, and again made his prayer to Our Lady, saying:

"Most dear and holy Virgin, Queen of Heaven, in the name of your Son my Lord and God, Who lies here wounded for my sake, I do most heartily entreat your aid. Behold, I have given your Son's image in pledge for the moneys that this usurer hath lent me, for indeed He died to be surety for us all. Therefore I do beseech you, that if by any impediment I cannot return to this city and render to this Jew his gold on the day that shall be appointed in the bond, and I do render the said moneys back to you at the place where then I am, you will acquit me before my creditor and give to him his gold again."

Then when he had so said, he saluted Our

The Christian's Surety

Lady's image with exceeding great reverence; and he went from the church, and the Jew with him, that he might have his loan. And when all was done, and Abraham had paid to him the gold that he needed, Theodore let buy a ship, and much merchandise wherewith he laded it. Then did he adventure forth with God to strange countries, where he traded the goods that he had with much profit, and without delay bought others to sell again, by the which he had great gain. Thus he prospered and grew rich; nor did he forget to render to the poor usury on that wealth which God had restored to him, but remembering the days of his poverty he was compassionate of their distress.

And trading in this manner, he travelled into distant countries that were far from the city of Byzance; and the years passed, till at last that time was come which Abraham the Jew had appointed for the repayment of his debt. And when that this term was but one day off, of a sudden Theodore remembered it; for indeed the matter had passed altogether from his mind. And he thought on his bond, and how that he had sworn to be sold into slavery if that he failed of his obligation. And greatly was he grieved because the time was so short and he could in no wise return to Byzance by the appointed day; for he lay with his ship in the haven of Alexandria.

So, being in great despair, he went into a church of that city, and there he did throw himself upon the ground before the image of

Saint Mary, beating his breast and making his bitter complaint. *The Christian's Surety*

"Alas!" he cried, "Sweet Queen of Angels, most compassionate Lady, I am undone! for surely the Devil has deceived me, thus to make me forget the day of payment. Now must I go into bondage, as I did swear by your Son's image that I would do; for though I had the wings of a dove, yet could I not come to Byzance from the place where I am till that the appointed time has long been past."

Then did Our Blessed Lady come to the aid of Theodore her servant, and she put into his heart a remembrance of the prayer that he had made to her, what time he had borrowed the money on the surety of her Son. Then he cried out, and said:

"How greatly foolish am I thus to trouble myself concerning the matter of this debt! Our Lord Jesu Christ, did He not die for me upon the Rood? Hath not His glorious Mother an infinite pity for all that believe on His Name? Whilst this surety I have, who can destroy me? Truly, I have but to render to her here the money I have borrowed; and if it please her she will give it back to the Jew, even according to my desire."

Then without delay Theodore got him a little casket, wherein he enclosed the whole of his debt, and locked it securely. And he went to the sea shore and there did commit the casket to the waters, recommending it to the care of Him by Whom both land and sea were

The Christian's Surety

made, and to His dear Mother Saint Mary, Stella Maris, Auxilium Christianorum. And of this he had great consolation, for now he knew that his fortunes lay altogether in the hands of Our Lord and Our Lady, than whom no man has better help.

Oh marvellous goodness of God! In that same night the casket did safely pass the waves of the great ocean, and came before the house of Abraham the Jew, where he dwelt by the sea shore in the city of Byzance, that was many leagues away. And it happened that the servant of this Abraham issued forth from his house in early morning, and he saw the little casket floating near shore. Therefore did he advance to take it, for it was fairly wrought and he coveted it greatly; and he wondered to see it floating thus upon the sea. But behold! as he approached, the casket did draw back; and whichever way he went to take it, still it retreated before him. And the servant, marvelling greatly that it beguiled him thus, called his master that he might see the miracle.

Then did Abraham come without delay, and saw the casket that floated near the shore beyond his reach. But when he came near it, greatly was he astonished, for forthwith the waves brought it to his feet: so that he stretched forth his hand and took it without difficulty, and he carried it into his house. Then, when he was alone, he opened it discreetly, and there did he find the gold that Theodore had placed therein, even the amount he had lent him: but he knew

not that this was the quittance of that debt. Therefore he was exceeding joyous, accounting it treasure trove; and he took the money, and the empty casket he put at the foot of his bed. But he told the matter to none. *The Christian's Surety*

And after many weeks, Theodore the merchant came back to Byzance with all the riches that he had gathered in foreign lands: and because he had been fortunate, his friends made him welcome, and feasted him and had great joy of his return. When Abraham the Jew heard of this he was exceeding wrath, and he went, and sought out Theodore without delay: and when he saw him, how prosperous he was, he looked on him very severely, saying:

"Alas! Theodore, meseemeth you are a true Christian: for you come to us in your need, but when that you are prosperous you repay us not again."

Then did the merchant begin to smile, for he knew himself to be secure; and he said, "What mean you?"

Abraham replied, "I lent you of my goods all that you desired, that you might trade with them and restore your fortunes for that you had come to poverty. And you gave me your troth, that if by one day you exceeded the time of repayment, then should you be my man, that I should sell you into bondage. And behold, the term that was appointed is already long past; nor have you done aught to repay me."

Then said Theodore, "I owe you nought;

The Christian's Surety

for on the day that was appointed I did repay the whole of my debt."

Abraham answered, "Christian, these words avail you nought; for I have many witnesses that will testify of the money that I lent you, but you can have no evidence of this repayment of which you boast. Therefore you may not deny your obligation."

"I have," said Theodore, "that Lady for witness, whose Son I did make surety of my debt. And by her I will testify to you, if it be necessary, that I have sent you safely all moneys that you did lend."

Now at this, because the merchant was obdurate, Abraham was greatly wrath; and he replied to him that this thing he could neither prove nor do. And so high the words mounted between them, that at last they must go to the church where the pledge was given, there to settle their dispute: and great company of people went with them, for the matter had been noised abroad in their neighbourhood. Then, having come to the church, Theodore, for that he did put all his trust in God and Our Lady, went, and kneeled down right humbly before the image of the Crucified in His Mother's arms, Whom before he had given as his pledge. And he prayed with all his heart to Our Dolorous Lady that she would have compassion on him, and incline her Son to his relief. And he cried saying:

"Sweet Lady, Saint Mary, who didst bear in maidenhood my Lord and God, I humbly be-

seech you to hear me to-day, that am your very faithful child and poor servant. And I entreat, most glorious Lady, sith that your Son whom you hold is most truly God my Redeemer, my surety and my pledge, that you will bear witness of the truth before this Jew that would destroy me: to wit, that I did render back again the moneys that he lent."

The Christian's Surety

Then, to the great amazement of all that were in the church, the image of the Blessed Virgin replied to the prayer of Theodore the merchant: and it said, so loud and clear that all who were present might hear it:

"I am witness indeed that you have sent to this Jew the gold that he did lend, even on the day he ordained. And good proof hath he got, for the casket wherein you did place his gold lies even now at the foot of his bed."

When Abraham the Jew heard Our Lady thus speak, he was greatly afraid; for now it came into his mind that this casket indeed had come to him on the waters on the day he had ordained to the merchant for repayment of his debt; and none save himself knew that gold had been therein, nor yet where he had bestowed it. Therefore, being brought to an exceeding fear of God's judgments, he did let know publicly that he had indeed found his moneys in that casket, the which by a miracle had been brought to his door: and because of this marvel he was converted to our holy Faith, and was baptized, he and all his family. And in remembrance of this favour that the Queen

The Christian's Surety

of Angels did for Theodore her servant, each year upon the day wherein she did witness for him they do sing carols and hold solemn vigil in the Church of Our Lady that is in the city of Byzance. The which city the mighty Emperor Constantine, of great and noble memory, did afterwards cause to be called in his name, Constantinople.

OUR LADY OF THE TOURNAMENT

HERE WE TELL THE HISTORY OF THE BLESSED WALTER OF BIRBECH, AND HOW THE VIRGIN MARY HONOURED HIM IN THE LISTS

Our Lady of the Tournament

IN Germany there lived a certain noble knight, that had to name Sir Walter of Birbech: he was a right powerful lord of that land, for he possessed much riches and was beside a very valiant man. But this knight, though all did him great honour, had a pious and an humble heart; for all his love was set on things unseen, and even from his childhood he had been accustomed to count himself above all else the friend and servant of God and of His Mother, Madame Saint Mary. Therefore, when that he was come to the flower of his age, at the which time it is the custom of chivalry to swear fealty to some fair lady, whose gage one may bind upon one's arm, and for whose sake one may tilt in the lists, jousting against all comers to uphold her fame: then did it seem to Sir Walter that no better Queen of Love could he choose for his Mistress than the Virgin Mother of the Love Divine, to wit, Our Lady, Queen of Heaven. And he dedicated himself altogether

Our Lady of the Tournament

to the upholding of her honour, and dubbed himself her liege servant and very faithful knight: taking her device, that is the lily flower, to set upon his pennon and his shield, and binding about his arm her favour, that is a scarf of blue exceeding fair. Great joy did he have of this devotion, as all that Lady's lovers do; and he fasted and gave alms that he might make himself more worthy of his Mistress, every day hearing her Mass if he might contrive it. And thus in the secret places of his heart he greatly increased in her love.

Now on a certain time it was decreed and proclaimed that a great tourney should be held in a castle of that land. Thither would Sir Walter go with many knights and squires of his company to do battle for his Lady's fame: for verily all his heart was given to the worship of the Blessed Virgin, so that she seemed to him the fairest Maid and most noble Mistress knight could desire, and whensoever he dreamed of womanhood, then that Queen of Women came into his mind. Therefore, having made himself ready, he set out for this tournament on the day that was ordained, having with him his esquire and divers knights of his meinie, that would join in the jousts. And it was Saturday, the which day is most specially dedicate to the Blessed Virgin Mary.

And it happened that their road passed by a certain Abbey, that was consecrated in the name of the Mother of God: and it was very early in the morning, being close upon the hour of

Prime. And when Sir Walter saw this abbey-church, he, knowing that very surely the Mass of his Lady was at that time sung therein, did exhort his companions with exceeding fervour that they should enter and hear Mass before they went into the lists. *Our Lady of the Tournament*

"For it may be," he said, "that we shall this day lose our lives, and then we may never again do this devoir for the Queen of Heaven; and moreover this is Saturday, that is the day whereon all her friends should do her worship if they can."

But the knights his companions refused him, saying, "It grows late, and if we loiter we shall but arrive when the tourney is at an end. Therefore tarry not for this office this morning, for indeed there is danger in delay."

Saith Sir Walter, "Natheless I will go in; for never did faithful knight come to misfortune for any courtesy he did to the Lady of his desire."

Then he entered into the church, that was very great, having several fair chapels and altars therein: and at one of the said altars a priest was, that said with his clerk the Mass of the Blessed Virgin. Thither Sir Walter went, and kneeled down upon the ground right humbly, that he might have the benefits of that most sweet and piteous miracle whereby the Lady Mary's Son is brought anew into the world.

But or ever this Mass was ended, came a priest to another altar, and there began to say the Introit of Our Lady, that is the "Salve, sancta

Our Lady of the Tournament

Parens." Then did Sir Walter think within himself, "Verily, it would be greatly discourteous were I to rise up and go from the church whiles that my Lady's Mass is being said. Rather must I wait till this one be finished, and so soon as the *Ite* is come I will go out right quickly and haste me to the tourney lest I be too late."

But when the second Mass was nearly over, came the Lord Abbot to recite his *confiteor* before the High Altar that was in the midst of the choir; for it was the pious custom of this abbey to honour Our Lady each Saturday with so many Masses as they might. And one following another as quickly as could be, Sir Walter left not his devotion, but heard each right humbly to the end: for he held it but unknightly to break by his departure this pageant of worship which so sweetly honoured the Lady that he loved.

Then when at last the Masses were done and the clerks gone out of the choir, he went out from the church and pursued after his comrades as quickly as he could: and now the morning was well-nigh spent, but he knew it not, for short had seemed the time whilst he made his orisons. And when he drew near to the castle where the tourneying should be, there he met many knights all armed for the lists that came from it.

Then he hailed them, and said, "What! is not the jousting yet begun?"

They answered, "Yea, and is long since

over, for it is close on noon, and we go homewards." *Our Lady of the Tournament*

And he, greatly vexed because of his ill fortune, said, "Who has prevailed?"

Replied these gentlemen, "Sir Walter of Birbech, a most fair and valiant knight; and indeed his name is in all men's mouths, for he carried all before him."

Then was Sir Walter full of amazement, for he could not understand how this might be: howsoever he went on his way to that place where the tourney was, and there he entered into his pavilion that was set upon the field and made him ready; putting on his armour that was bound about the arm-piece with the gage of blue stuff that he wore for his Lady's sake, and taking his shield whereon was blazoned her lily flower. Then he went forth into the field: but the joust was altogether done, as those knights he met upon the way had said, and the ladies were gone from the galleries and the heralds from the lists. Natheless, much folk yet there was, that spoke upon the fortunes of the day; and so soon as Sir Walter was come into the ground, behold divers knights that were there armed cap-a-pie separated themselves from this company, and came, and set themselves before him exceeding humbly, and begged of him that he would be pleased to show them mercy and use them courteously.

Then said Sir Walter, "Fair sirs, I know not of what you speak nor what may be the cause of your petition."

Our Lady of the Tournament

Said the knights, "Know you not that this day you have overcome us in the lists; wherefore we are every one your prisoners according to the law of chivalry? Therefore we make our submission, and ask only that you do entreat us graciously and use us well."

Sir Walter replied, "My sweet friends, here is some error; for very surely I have neither jousted with you nor overcome you this day."

"Nay," said the knights; "but it is a true thing that this day we have given ourselves into your hand: and indeed no man could resist you, so well and fiercely did you tilt. Never have we seen such marvellous deeds of arms as those that you have done in these jousts: for wherever the press was thickest, there did we see your shield that has the lily flower, and wherever you went, good fortune went with you. Verily, it seemed that some power was with you; for none might touch you, however valiant, and no man, however skilled, went free of your spear. And no error can there be, for we heard your voice, that cried perpetually, *Virgo Virginum!* and also *Jesu Maria!* and likewise we saw the blue gage that is yet bound about your arm."

Then did Sir Walter fall down upon his knees right humbly, giving thanks; for he perceived that no less an one than his dear Mistress, that is the very Mother of God, had that day upheld his honour in the field. For whilst that her knight did kneel before her altar and there do her all the courtesy he could, that sweet Lady

did arm her in his likeness, and ride to the tourney in his place. And when he disclosed the matter to those knights his adversaries, greatly were they amazed; and they cried mercy, one and all, to the Blessed Virgin, for that they had presumed to tilt against her spear. Then did each embrace other, all weeping for gladness, and they went altogether to the Abbey Church of Saint Mary, that there they might give thanks. *Our Lady of the Tournament*

And Sir Walter made offering of his shield upon the altar, for he knew that he had a better defender than any earthly weapon, even that *scutum fidei* of which the Apostle speaks: and he thanked his Lady very heartily for this courtesy of hers, and swore ever to keep spotless the pennon that she had deigned to bear, and never to use that spear wherewith she had helped his honour save for the defending of pure womanhood or the succouring of the oppressed.

Now after many years had gone, it happened on a certain high feast of the glorious Virgin Mary, that Sir Walter came with many others to a church where her Mass was said. And now his age was ripe, and the fame of his valour and holiness was gone out into many lands; whereby it was known of all that he was the knight of Madame Saint Mary, and rode not save in defence of the just. But the priest that said this Mass was a stranger unto him, being newly come to the place, and he knew not whom the knight might be to whom all did so great a

Our Lady of the Tournament

reverence. And behold! when he was come to the sacring of the Blood of Christ, and raised the holy chalice from the altar whereon it stood, that priest saw beneath the place where the cup had been, a cross of pure gold, exceeding rich and fair, and therewith a cartel of vellum; and on the cartel there was much writing, that was in letters of fine gold like to those Gospel books that are made for the use of pious kings.

And he took it in his hand and read it, and these were the words thereon: "This holy cross you shall bear on my part, that am Mary the Mother of Christ, to my dear friend and servant, Walter, knight of Birbech; and for my sake and that of my Son, Whose sign and gage it is, this token he shall now put on and bear even until the end of his life, in the place of that favour of blue that he hath long worn about his arm."

When this matter he had read, the priest was greatly amazed; but he doubted not the truth of it, for he was a right faithful man. Therefore, being come to the ending of the Mass, he mounted into the pulpit, and cried, saying: "Is there here a knight that has to name Sir Walter of Birbech?"

Then several of them that stood about Sir Walter, that knew him well, cried: "This is he," and they brought him to the priest, the which led him apart a little way, that they might speak together privily. Then when they were alone, that priest saith to him:

"Give thanks, my brother, for Our Lady Saint Mary is pleased to show you a most sovereign grace." *Our Lady of the Tournament*

Saith the knight: "This may well be, for the lovingkindness of that Lady is beyond aught that we can understand."

The priest said to him: "Kneel down upon the earth, the more fitly to receive the holy gift that she hath sent you." And when Sir Walter had so done, he gave to him the fair cross and also the cartel, saying: "Now have you received the very gage of Jesu Christ His Love, even the Sign of our salvation."

Then did Sir Walter receive the cross with exceeding great joy, giving thanks upon his knees in that his glorious Mistress had held him worthy of this gift; for thereby he knew that he was called to an higher service than that of earthly warfare—namely, to the very chivalry of God and of His saints. And being wholly converted to thoughts of heaven by this high mystery that the glorious Virgin had declared to him, he did betake himself straitway to the Abbey of Hemmerode in that country; and there he made offering of Our Lady's cross upon the altar, and took the habit of religion according to the Rule of Cîteaux. Many years did he live in that brotherhood, in God's fear and much gladness, and great and arduous battle did wage against the Enemy in hell, the which is doughty foe for any knight. Many wonders did he also by Saint Mary's grace, that here were too long to set in writing, and the

Our Lady of the Tournament

Order of Cîteaux had great honour because of the sanctity of his life.

And when he was come to a great age, being full of faith and of charitable works, contrite though holy, for he knew that nought he might compass could make him worthy of his Mistress' love, the Blessed Mother of God was pleased to call him to herself. And by her safe conduct, that had vanquished alike his temporal and his spiritual foes, he did pass from darkness unto light, from labour to rest, from warfare to reward; from this world's tournament to the pleasaunce of his heavenly home. Whereto we do pray one and all that our Lord Jesu Christ, that is the Lady Mary's Son, may lead us:

QUI EST VIA IN EXEMPLO, VERITAS IN PROMISSO, VITA IN PRAEMIO. AMEN.

THE VIRGIN'S BRIDEGROOM

AND HEREIN THE HISTORY OF A CERTAIN CHILD THAT BETROTHED HIMSELF TO THE IMAGE OF OUR LADY

The Virgin's Bridegroom

THERE was in the old time a great lord, a prince duke or count, that was rich and powerful, having the governance of many lands. And he was the king's kinsman, and had to wife a most noble lady, the which was of good renown in that country because she led an holy life and was the friend of God. One son she bore him, and reared him in Christ's brotherhood to the age of ten years; and he was a fair and well-spoken child, so that his father loved him well, as much and more than fathers are wont to love their sons. He made him to learn all scholarship, and his mother bred him in all piety; nor was there ever a day in which the boy said not the Hours of Our Lady if he could, for this he loved to do. And there was a chapel close against his father's house where this good child could serve the glorious Virgin: there he went with his schoolmaster each day to make his orisons.

Now there was in this chapel a most fair image of Saint Mary, that was of a woman's height,

The Virgin's Bridegroom

and so richly painted that it seemed no carven image but a living thing; and the child loved it. When he found himself alone there, as sometimes chanced, he would go to the feet of that Lady, and would pray to her with great devotion, and tell her all he did, and ask her love: and the day that he did not thus draw near her, there to say his prayers, he had neither joy nor good courage. Of a surety it became to him all his life and all his comfort thus to do, so that he wished to make of her his Mistress and his Queen, and to speak with her and she with him, as Mistress and servant may do: for so it is with children when they love. Thus it was that as he grew in age and understanding, he ever redoubled his ardour towards her: and he was her faithful servant and very loyal page, but none knew it, neither his parents nor his schoolmaster, for he hid his devotion discreetly.

And it happened, that one day this child went alone to that chapel; and there he knelt down full gladly, and prayed devoutly and with all his heart that he might have Our Lady's grace and ever serve her. Then that dear and honoured Lady, because she knew him how constant he was and how desirous of her grace, and that he was yet a pure and clean virgin, the which she greatly loves, began to call the child by the mouth of her image. And she said,

"My sweet friend, doubt not. Because that you have warmly loved me, very surely all that you desire shall come to pass."

Now at this the child began to tremble, for

he was frightened, hearing the image speak: he was not more than eleven years old. But presently for his encouragement, Our Lady spoke to him again; and now her voice was sweeter than honey, so that none might resist it.

The Virgin's Bridegroom

And she said, "Have no fear, little brother, but rather let your heart be full of joy; for my Son has for my sake granted your prayer, that you should know me what I am, and therefore I may speak with you by the mouth of this image. And for this cause you must not doubt nor be afraid; neither of me nor of any other thing. For I love you more than I love myself, and surely I will protect you."

"Hahay, most sweet Lady," said the child, "what is this that you have said? It is not possible that you love me more than you love yourself. Very surely I love you exceeding well; for I come every morning and evening to pray before your image without fail. But you love me not at all, for you speak to me never, though I have often asked it; neither do you show me such kindness as my father and mother have done, the which I have desired of you greatly."

When the Queen of Angels heard this child so loving and so ardent towards her, she was minded to test him, for she wished to have his love. Therefore said she, "Tell me the truth, in what manner and how greatly you do love me. Take care that you lie not; for if you do this, of a surety I shall know it well."

The Virgin's Bridegroom

"Lady," he said, "I love you more than I love my father or my mother or myself."

"My fairest friend," said she, "now I see that indeed you love me without fantasy; therefore I will have you to know that I have set my love upon you also, and so greatly that I am jealous to have you. Now look at me well, and consider whether I please you, that you may not make a bargain of which you will repent. Am I as fair and as queenly as you would that your sweetheart should be?"

Then the Mother of God did illuminate that image with her gracious presence, till it shone with so great a glory that no tongue could express it. And it was very old, for it had been in that place an hundred years, yet now it seemed to the child new-made and exceeding fair, for it shone with that light which dwells in the Empyrean Heaven, the which makes all things new.

And the Blessed Virgin spoke by its mouth and said to him, "Fair and dear boy, are you willing to take for yourself so sweet a woman-friend as this, that will be with you all your life to your comfort, and in death will stand by you to save your soul?"

"Hahay, Lady," said the child. "I ask no other Paradise."

"Draw near, then," said the image, "and give me your hand and your troth, in token that you will have no other espoused wife but me. For in you is that treasure of virginity which I greatly love. Therefore I do desire to preserve it; and to bring you, by this troth that we shall make,

a clean maiden to Heaven, there to receive the crown that is laid up for them that will love me with a pure love. Verily that crown is exceeding fair, and great is the joy of those that shall wear it." *The Virgin's Bridegroom*

"Lady," answered the child, "I shall do nought that can deface your love; and I promise you that I will love you while I live, and will take no other sweetheart, nor wed no other wife —no, not though I should lose my life for it."

"My friend," said she, "come now and kiss me; and I will give you my hand in troth."

Then did the little boy draw near to the image, the which reached out her hand and gave it to him, and he kissed it three times, weeping because of the great joy that he had; for now his heart was filled with a marvellous happiness, being uplifted by the love divine. And when he had so done, Our Lady took her hand from him and said,

"Fair sweet friend, now must you make good cheer, for I am your Bride that is duly affianced, and my love is always with you. Remember me ever, for now we may no longer talk together. I go my way, and do commend you to the care of God."

And presently the child's schoolmaster came to the chapel, and found him kneeling before the image of Saint Mary; and he saw that he had been crying. But the child told him nought of what had chanced, neither then nor afterward, but kept all that had happened very closely. And he was of good cheer, as his Sweetheart

The Virgin's Bridegroom

had bidden him to be, returning often to her chapel, that he might be with her image that he loved. In this was all his joy, for though he never heard her voice again, he knew that there she was with him.

But his father, that was a very valiant lord, more apt in the exercise of arms than in the making of orisons, marvelled greatly where his son went so often; for he would never ride to hawking nor to the tournament, though he was a brave and graceful child, but would be always about his secret business, that was, though they knew it not, the service of his heavenly Friend. And his father was displeased at it, for he would have his son expert in chivalry and deeds of war. Therefore when he was gone fifteen years, and kept still these habits of devotion, going little abroad and refusing himself to all feasting and merriment, for that he had an inner and a secret joy, it came into the thoughts of that seigneur his father that it were best that the boy be married as quickly as might be, for then his wife would shame him from his foolishness. So he did send and let make great search, with intent to find some fair and discreet maiden of good lineage; and at last he discovered one, that was damoiselle at the court of the king. So there would he go with the child, that the marriage might take place without delay.

But when the boy heard of it he was full of grief and fear; for he knew that he might not do this thing, because he had given his troth to an heavenly Bride. And indeed, for the love

The Virgin's Bridegroom

that he had of her, he was most firmly determined against it, and so did he say; but his father was set upon the marriage, and would not hear him. Therefore, when the day of departure came, the child, that knew not how else he might keep his loyalty, hid himself in secret; and great search was made for him through the demesne, but at the last he was discovered. Then did his father curse him and threaten him, for now he was exceeding wrath. And he took the boy and brought him by force to the king's palace, and to the damoiselle whom he should wed; for which cause many laughed and mocked, to see so unwilling a bridegroom brought to church. And there was great company of knights and ladies assembled for the marriage; and these came with the child and his parents to the chapel where the wedding should be. There was also the damoiselle, and she was exceeding fair of body, young and gay. And the bishop and his clerks were there, that should say the nuptial Mass.

Then said the bishop: "Fair friend, tell me truly, will you have this woman to be your wife?"

"Of a surety, sir," said the child, "I will not. For nothing in the whole world will I wed any woman, for, indeed, I had rather lose my life than do it."

"Believe it not," said the father. "He is but ashamed before his sweetheart, whom he sees here so fair and debonnair. It is the way of children; therefore take no heed of his words."

The Virgin's Bridegroom

And he took the boy, who would have withdrawn himself, and by force he pushed him forward, so that he should stand by his bride. Then the child, seeing that they would use violence with him, and being in great terror for fear that they should make him to break his troth, struggled against his father and against those that helped him: for now the knights and ladies of that meinie laid their hands on him to restrain him, with laughter and mocking. And so greatly did he struggle that at last he broke from them, and escaped out of their hands, and ran away.

Then the father cried out exceeding wrathful, "Take him quickly; let him not go, he is mad."

And a great rout went after the boy—to wit, all the wedding guests and serving-men that were about them. But he ran quickly, so that he won out of the chapel, and to the stairway that went from it into the palace-yard. And because of the haste he was in, coming to the descent of the stairs he miscounted one, and missing the step he fell from top to bottom a great way: and there he lay upon the paving, for he had broken his neck. And when the company that went after him came to the foot of the stair, there did they find his body lying.

Then those knights and ladies, squires and damoiselles, seeing this thing, began to cry and make great moan, so that some were near to swooning of it; for indeed this was most piteous end to marriage feast. And what shall

I say to you of his mother? Too long were it to tell all her grief and pain, the which was so great that she longed only to die, thus to be with her child again: for he was her only son. *The Virgin's Bridegroom*

But whilst all endured this anguish, standing about the body of the child, their grief was on a sudden turned to amazement: for they saw in the sky great light, as it were of many suns, and in it a rich company that came toward them, so full of splendour that no tongue could describe it. Then also did they hear about them a sweet and most melodious chanting, and none might say who made it, for no minstrels could they see. And all their sorrow went from them when that light and that music drew near, for this was that heavenly melody which is heard before the Throne of God, the which puts out the thought of earthly grief.

And from out of the midst of the light there came presently a lady, most exceeding fair: and it was seen that she was whiter than a lily flower, as was said, "Sicut lilium inter spinas, sic amica mea inter filias," for this was the Mother of the King of Heaven. And so great was the shining of her purity that no man could endure to look upon it: for the which reason all lowered their eyes and gazed upon the ground, fearing lest they might be blinded. And whilst they so stood, much astonished and full of dread, that sweet and holy Lady came from amongst her train, and went to the body of the child where it lay. And she took him by the hand and raised him up;

The Virgin's Bridegroom

and at once he opened his eyes and smiled upon her, for he still lived.

Then said the Blessed Virgin: "Fair brother, here is your bride; therefore make ready for your nuptial feast. For I am come in quest of your soul, the which you did long since betroth to me; and I pray you that you will give it to me quickly, that I may go hence."

Then the child did heave a sigh, and his soul left him, the which the Mother of God received in her arms, and carried with great joy to Paradise; and it was crowned with the crown of virginity.

Good is it therefore to keep with constancy the vows we have made to that Lady; and ever to observe her law, that is the perfect law of purity. For by this miracle we do know that she keepeth her troth with her lovers: yea, even to the end of the world!

THE LILY

OF A KNIGHT THAT WAS MONK OF CITEAUX, THE WHICH COULD LEARN NO LATIN SAVE THE WORDS "AVE, MARIA!"

The Lily

HERE tell we for the comfort of the unlearned the history of a very simple and ignorant knight. He was a man much skilled in the exercise of arms, that had fought right valiantly under the banners of the Emperor, the Doge, and the Most Christian King; so that he had gathered to himself great riches and many wounds. But in spite of his hardihood, he grew old, as we all must do; and came at last to the time in which the making of his soul seemed a greater matter than the taking of many towns, and rest more desirable than victory. For though battles be great and honourable things, yet is there a greater and a secret fight; and this every man must conduct in privity.

Now this knight, though he had loved not the air of the withdrawing rooms, nor idled ever in the Courts of Love, had throughout his life most tenderly esteemed all ladies, being quick in their defence and exceeding careful of their ease. And at those times when he had

The Lily

found opportunity for the hearing of the Mass, it was rather to the Mother than the Son that he found it easiest to offer his devotion. Thus he would salute right courteously the Lady of Ladies, the Queen of Heavenly Love, saying very devoutly, *Ave, Maria!* for these words he had learned whilst yet he was very young, though what followed them he never could remember. Nor did he ever, that he knew it, pass by an image of the Blessed Virgin without offering her this salutation; a thing that should greatly have edified his followers, and if it did not, may their souls bear the blame!

But in that he had now come to an age in which the ladies of this world no longer needed his devotion, the thoughts of this knight turned naturally to that Better Country where, as he was taught, grey hairs and stiff joints are no impediments to success. And because from the castles of his patrons that country seemed dim and very hard of access, he dismissed his men-at-arms, withdrew from his services, and in the seventieth year of his age retired to the cloister, taking the habit of religion in the house of Cîteaux.

Now if the first business of a good monk be holiness, the second is very surely the due and learned recitation of his prayers; and more especially of that divine and daily Office whereby the brotherhood from the stalls of the choir do mark the night hours and the divisions of the day. It was therefore with a very natural vexation that the monks of Cîteaux discovered

that their new brother knew two words only of the Latin tongue; those namely of *Ave, Maria!* which had blessed the motions of his worldly life. With these words he would very rightly greet the image of Our Lady whenever he passed it; nor did this courtesy content him, for he would also laud her in this manner during the hours in which the choir Office was sung. And the cantors were much wrath at it, for they deemed that such antics comported not with the right worship of God. But this brother, for that he was altogether without scholarship, could in no wise read in the Psalter the psalms of the day, nor divine the matter of his brethren's prayers; and ever in the chant of *Beatus Vir* and *Dixit Insipiens* his voice might be heard crying *Ave, Maria!* The thing brought contempt on the singing of the community; amongst those brothers that were tempted to the sin of ribaldry it became even an occasion of mirth. It was plain to all that this ignorant brother must be so instructed that he might at least stay silent whilst those wiser than he offered the fruits of their scholarship to God. The Lord Abbot had ever been of opinion that a bad Latinist maketh a bad monk; therefore did he ordain that his sons should make it their business to teach this poor novice the language of religion as quickly as they might. *The Lily*

But the new brother was old, and not apt at the learning of new words: they were hard to utter and easy to forget. He was humble and obedient, full of a very loving devotion; but

The Lily

the tongue that could order his men-at-arms stumbled amongst the antiphons, and found even the Paternoster too hard to be contrived. Though he was much diligent, yet many weeks went by and still the only prayer ever heard upon his lips was that same cry of *Ave, Maria!* with which he was accustomed to greet the Mother of God. This did he say continually, with exceeding great fervour of devotion; nor did he forget to wake oft in the darkness to offer his praise to that Lady, for he loved her well.

So at last, because he was very old and simple, and it was plain that he could learn nothing, the brothers left their teaching, agreeing together that he was a witless person lacking all true vocation, and insusceptible of divine knowledge. When strangers came to the monastery, they looked curiously at the foolish monk that knew no Latin but *Ave, Maria!*: and some there were that mocked at him, but for the most part they left him alone as a simple fellow whose deeds were of little account. He was given that stall in the choir whence his voice might make least confusion; and there, at the hours of the Office, he confidently offered his praise to Our Lady, whilst his brothers chanted their verses and responds from "Dominus vobiscum" to "Sicut erat in principio."

And at last, when he had lived amongst them many years, often the subject of laughter and contempt, yet never ceasing the courteous devotion which he offered to the Queen of Heaven in all

love and loyalty, as good knight to liege lady ever should, that ignorant brother died. And he was wrapped, as the Rule ordains, in the habit of the order, and buried without pomp or outward show in the cemetery of the monks. Nor did any give great heed to his passing, for he had been a very humble and a quiet old man, unnoticed save for that constant prayer of *Ave, Maria!* with which he had marked the minutes of his day. His life had done nought, save by the gift of his great riches, for the advancement of religion; his death meant only the ending of a folly too gentle for any to resent. Only the Lord Abbot, for that he had much skill in the art of music, perceived that the daily Office was now chanted with a greater smoothness and harmony than it had aforetime attained. And he was exceeding glad of it, for though his sons might not all be saints, he greatly desired that they should be known in the courts of Paradise for good musicians, and the ill-timed devotions of the ignorant monk had vexed him oft. *The Lily*

But it happened a while after, when already the absence of that brother had ceased to be matter of common speech and the memory of his folly had grown dim, that a certain lay brother, the which was also an unlettered man, walked in the hour of recreation in the cemetery of the monks. And it was an exceeding bare and desolate place, that had no trees nor flowering plants therein; but crosses there were of black wood that marked the graves wherein the brothers had been laid. Therefore was that lay

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brother greatly astonished when he saw, in a corner beneath the wall, some white and golden thing that grew to a man's full height. It seemed to him that this must be a flower, and he knew not who had dared to plant it. And being filled with a very ardent curiosity, he drew nearer that he might the better see what it was; for it was the hour of twilight, and already distant things grew dim. But this thing did not vanish away, as he had feared that it might do when he came near; rather did it grow in size, towering above him in great majesty. And he saw that it was a great and pale lily, even such a lily as Saint Gabriel the Archangel bore to Our Lady with his Salutation. And it sprang from the earth that was heaped upon one of the graves; and though its roots were planted in corruption, yet its petals shone with a whiteness that is of Paradise, and letters of fine gold were written on each of its leaves. And the lay brother, seeing it thus, was full of amazement; for the place wherefrom it grew was not that in which the body of the sub-Prior, an holy and a learned man esteemed of all, had been laid; but it was the newest grave in all the cemetery, even that of the ignorant monk.

Then, because he was exceeding perplexed by that which he had seen, and further, being unlettered, could not read the words that were on the leaves of the flower, that lay brother went in haste and great fear to the Lord Abbot, and told him of the lily that grew amongst the graves. And the Abbot was much astonished,

and he came straitway with many of the monks, to see what it might be. But when they were come to that part of the cemetery wherein the lily was, behold, great fear and reverence fell on them; for these were lettered men, and they knew that the flower they looked on was not such an one as grows on our poor earth. For the light which came from its petals put out that of the lantern which they carried, and on each of its leaves was written in letters of gold the words of the Angelic Salutation, even *Ave, Maria!* *The Lily*

Then were they all greatly amazed, devoutly regarding this miracle; and some crossed themselves, fearing an evil magic, and some went hot-foot to their prayers. But the Lord Abbot was full of perplexity, for he knew not any cause wherefore this mercy should have been vouchsafed to his flock. Therefore he did ordain that spades be brought, and that they should dig with much care and dread about the roots of the lily where it sprang from the earth, to the end that they might discover the secret of its growth. And having so said, he retired to his chamber, there to give thanks for the miracle; and he also entreated God right humbly that light might be granted him concerning that which this marvel should portend.

And the brothers did as he commanded them with exceeding care and reverence, for they feared to lay hands upon the holy flower or trouble the earth about its roots. Yet for all their travail they shook it not at all; but they dug

The Lily

deep and yet deeper, and still the roots went before them into the earth. And when they had gone to a great depth, they found at last the place wherefrom it sprang; as with due labour and searching the roots of all things that flower upon this earth may be found. Then left they their toil and went to the Abbot, greatly troubled at that which they had seen; for this matter they might not understand. And they said to him:

"Oh, Lord Abbot! we have discovered the roots of the heavenly lily and the place wherefrom it draws its nourishment; for we have searched out its beginnings, and have found them where they do take their rise. And they spring from between the lips of that ignorant monk our brother; even he that could utter no Latin save the words 'AVE, MARIA!'"

THE MINSTREL OF ROC AMADOUR

HOW HE MADE MUSIC FOR MADAME SAINT MARY'S SAKE, AND HAD THEREFROM EXCEEDING SWEET REWARD

The Minstrel of Roc Amadour

OUR dear Lady, God's Mother, Queen of Angels, hath done in her church of Roc Amadour many miracles both fair and kindly, and they are written in the French tongue in a great book, that all may know them. And one exceeding courteous marvel did she do for a certain minstrel her servant, the which I will tell here, that every heart may understand Our Lady's courtesy.

In that country there was a troubadour, a man of much renown, for he had great skill in the tenzon and the sirvente: his name was Pierre de Syglar. He was a very courteous minstrel, loving to laud all ladies with voice and with viol; and especially would he sing the praise of Saint Mary Queen of Ladies whenever he might, for he held her in great love and reverence. To Roc Amadour Pierre came on a certain day, that was a time of pilgrimage; for the which reason many folk of his neighbourhood were with him. And within the church was also great company of other pilgrims, that

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had come out of distant countries for the sake of their salvation, and there did make great feast.

And having entered into the chapel of the Blessed Virgin, wherein is her shrine all set about with candles and with votive gifts, there did Pierre make his orisons, imploring very meekly her protection and her aid. Then, when he had so done, he took his viol, the which he always carried with him because he loved it much, and :

"Now, dear Lady," he said, "sith I have paid my reverence and made my most humble request, deign, I entreat you, to hear the sweet music wherewith I will entertain you if I can. Verily it is the joy of all ladies ; therefore may hap, Madame, it shall be pleasing to you. For meseemeth that here many do make prayers to you, and ask your comfort and your help, but few laud you with lai and rondel, or seek to pleasure you with songs of chivalry and love, as every loyal troubadour should laud and serve the Mother of his King. And moreover, if this I may not do for you, then nought can I compass for your service, the which were a sorry thing ; for in the making of melody is all my skill."

Then did Pierre draw the bow very softly across the strings of his viol, so that there came from it such heavenly melody that it drew all the folk wherewith the church was filled. And soon he had about him great company of clerks and pilgrims that would hear him ; for indeed he made so fair a music that it seemed as if his

viol would speak. And when he had sweetly greeted and long praised Saint Mary with all his heart, then did he play to her those melodies whereto the maidens love to dance, and sang also many piteous histories of heroes slain in battle and gentle ladies crossed in love. And when he was come to an end he fell down before her image and cried with a loud voice, saying :

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" Dear Mother of God, most courteous Lady, if this my music has made you glad, now I do ask of you a gueridon ; for it is the custom of all ladies so to reward their troubadours. Therefore I do most humbly demand that you will give me one of those candles of which you have so many round your shrine ; verily, you cannot need them all, for never have I seen so great array. Peerless Lady, will you not spare me one, that therewith I may light me at my supper, and think upon your love ? "

Now the heart of Our Lady Saint Mary, that is the fount of courtesy and the source of kindliness, was inclined towards this minstrel that had played his best to please her ; therefore, because she can do all things that she will, she granted his request, and at the hand of her angel she caused a tall and fair candle that burned before her shrine to descend from its place, and come, and rest on the viol wherewith he had extolled her. And all the people that were in the chapel saw it. But one of the monks of the abbey, a foolish and an ignorant man that had to name Gerard, the which was

The Minstrel of Roc Amadour

custodian of that place, stood before the shrine to guard the treasure thereof, for it was very rich. And he, because he was dull of wit and might not understand the matter, was exceeding wrath: for he dreamed not that the glorious Virgin would do marvels for a minstrel's sake, and held the miracle to be an evil sorcery. Therefore he fell upon Pierre the troubadour, and took from off his viol the candle which the Queen of Heaven had made to descend on it, and put it back on the shrine whence it had come, threatening him harshly, and saying:

"Let us cast out from the church the enchanter that has done this sacrilege, for very surely the Enemy is with him."

But the jongleur heeded not the foolish monk that thus maligned him, for well he knew that Our Lady was his friend; and because of the gueridon she had given him, so great joy was in his heart that he was moved to tears, giving thanks in silence to God's Mother for her exceeding courtesy. Then presently he took his viol anew, for he was in no wise abashed by the vain words that Gerard had spoken: and lifting up his heart toward the Queen of Angels, he made in her praise a lai so sweet and pleasant that fairer melody that Blessed Lady had never heard in her church—neither in kyriel, sequence, nor respond. And so great joy did she have of it, that she was moved to do her minstrel the more honour therefore: and she made the fair candle that he had asked of her to descend anew from her altar, and it came,

and rested once more on his viol. And full five hundred saw this miracle.

The Minstrel of Roc Amadour

Then Gerard the sacristan, seeing this thing, and being but a fool that had his head full of relics and knew nought of the mercies of Almighty God, was altogether filled with anger; for he loved not those matters that he might not understand. And he cried:

"Here is magic and vile sorcery, thus to desecrate Our Lady's shrine! The idle and the ignorant marvel at it, believing that a miracle has chanced; but well do I know that such enchantments are but the work of Simon Magus and his crew. Yea! his evil power it is, and no other thing, that hath caused this impious troubadour to call a candle from our holy shrine."

And he leaped upon Pierre the jongleur, being full of vexation because the people, that were amazed, doubted his words and helped him not; and he took from off the viol Saint Mary's gift, and mounted to the shrine there to fix it on that place wherefrom she made it to descend. Then said he:

"Behold! your miracle is put to nought; and now you shall be cast out of the church for blasphemer and magician."

But the minstrel, that was a wise and prudent man, was nowise moved by Gerard's wrath, but did most patiently endure it: for so glad he was to have Our Lady's grace, that nought that man might say could hurt him. Therefore, heeding not the foolish sacristan, that

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would have turned him away from her chapel, he began anew his music and singing; for well did he know that the glorious Virgin would bring him well out of the matter if he might please her by his song. And he sang a right joyous carol of Christ's Birth, and of the love He had toward His dam; and playing upon his viol, he sighed and wept also, being uplifted with exceeding fervour of spirit, for whilst his mouth sang the words of love, so did his heart entreat her. And he sweetly prayed God's Mother of her courtesy to hear him, and show him earnest of her grace; and that all might know him guiltless of blasphemy, he begged that she would again give her candle into his hands, the which the sacristan, that knew not Saint Mary's bounty, had twice taken away.

And now there was in the chapel great press of people that were much amazed by the wonder they had seen; and all marvelled greatly whether the candle, the which had twice descended at his prayer, would come again to Pierre the troubadour. And so sweetly did that minstrel play before Our Lady's image, that he made many souls to weep from pity; and so high did his heart sing, that the sound of it went even up to God. And now, as we are told, while he did serenade the Queen of Angels with all the skill he had, the candle did descend a third time from its place before the altar, and rested on his viol. Yea! three times did Saint Mary make this gift to her jongleur, that

so courteously entreated her and made music for her delight; and when this they saw, the people cried, saying: *The Minstrel of Roc Amadour*

"Ring! ring the bells! for great marvels are here; never did the Blessed Virgin fairer miracle, nor ever will at this her shrine."

Then was great feasting in the church, of priests and pilgrims and all pious folk, with much anthems and orisons and the carrying of lights. And all the bells were rung, that the people of the country side might know it; never did God hear them louder ring. And Pierre the minstrel came once more to the chapel of Our Lady, and there did offer upon her altar the candle wherewith she had paid his songs; most heartily thanking God and His glorious Mother for this exceeding grace. Hard must have been the heart that was not moved for joy of it; to see Our Lady's courtesy, and this courtesy that her troubadour did render her again.

Nor did he leave his devotion, nor ever forget the Queen of Heaven; for all his life long, each year he let bring to Roc Amadour a candle, that was of virgin wax and a full pound in weight. And he offered it before her shrine, and when he had lit it, he took his viol and made music, singing a sirvente in her praise. And he lived always Saint Mary's very loving servant, so that whensoever he entered any church, never would he leave it till he had sought out her image and there had sung her a lai; for he knew that she had joy of his songs.

The Minstrel of Roc Amadour

And when that it pleased God to end his life, be ye sure that the sweet Virgin forgat not her jongleur, but did bring him to Heavenly Syon; and his soul appeared at the Throne of God by the virtue of her intercession, that there it might evermore make music before her face.

Thus may those do that make music in Our Lady's honour, entreating her right courteously and serving her with their art. For if they laud her as her minstrel did, surely shall they be given another viol and a sweeter voice, to the end that they may join the company of minstrels that is in Heaven: even those spirits of the just made perfect, the which do offer day and night to God and to His glorious Mother the celestial music of their burning love.

THE VIGILS OF THE DEAD

HERE IS TOLD THE HISTORY OF A CERTAIN NOBLE VIRGIN, THAT SAID EVERY DAY THE HOURS OF OUR LADY, AND ONCE A WEEK THE VIGILS OF THE DEAD

The Vigils of the Dead

THERE was a maiden of noble birth that was comely and debonair and had much riches; for sith her father and mother died whilst yet she was a child, great wealth came to her, and many lands. And since she was thus solitary in this world's wilderness, having none to whom she owed obedience nor any save God in whom she might trust, this noble lady made offering of her virginity to Jesu Christ, and to His Mother, the glorious Virgin Mary; for she greatly feared the deception of earthly love. And she prayed Our Lady to have charge of her and help her keep her maidenhead, that she might be a worthy bride for her dear Son.

Thus dwelling on her demesne with her household, and living in honesty and charity as becomes the friend of God, this gentlewoman had all men's love and worship, for indeed she was a most fair ensample to that country side. For this cause, and also for the great wealth she had and the exceeding fairness of her face, many

The Vigils of the Dead

knights and noble lords did demand her hand in marriage; yea, so sweet of aspect she was, that assuredly there was no man in the kingdom that would not have right willingly possessed her. But the lady was full of prudence, courtesy, and learning, knowing well how to read both Latin and French, and her mind was little set on gallantry; moreover, of her piety each day it was her custom to say the Hours of Our Lady her protectress, that she might guard her from all villainy and grief, and once every week she said also the Vigils of the Dead, to help all faithful souls. And though many lords and gentlemen did ardently entreat her love, yet she replied to them all that for the vow she had made she might not give it them; for the love of Jesu Christ her Saviour was more precious than that of earthly friend.

Now certain of her kindred, hearing how that their cousin lived alone upon her lands, refusing herself to all men, so that she had no defender to do battle for her rights, made common cause that they might steal her lands and wealth from her: the which she could in no wise keep from them, for what can woman do alone? And by their villainy she saw herself greatly despoiled and impoverished, and she was full of grief for it, fearing lest in the end she be brought to beggary. And there was a knight, a strong lord and powerful in that land, valiant, discreet, and debonair, the which had set his heart on this lady; and she knew that he loved her exceeding well. Therefore, being in great

distress, not knowing what to do against them that would despoil her, she asked of this lord his help for friendship's sake. But he answered her saying : *The Vigils of the Dead*

"If you will give me your love, I will make war upon your kindred that do you this mischief, and restore all the lands that you have lost; but nought will I do for you till that you give me your troth."

She said, "Fair friend, this I cannot do, for my Lord Christ constraineth me."

Replied the knight, "If you will not do me this courtesy, little help shall I give you."

And he went his way, but he was in no wise disheartened, for he was well aware that this lady had small knowledge of love; therefore in a little while he came to her again and did beseech her anew, and told her the griefs that he endured because of his passion, which were indeed so great that often times he wished to die. And again he swore to be her defender in all things if that she would give him her troth.

But the lady excused herself very courteously, saying, "Verily, sire, I cannot break the vow that I have made for anything that may befall; and indeed he is but foolish that would tempt me to do it, for God and His Mother forbid, and I will not put my soul in peril to have worldly gain thereby. If my goods must go, so shall it be; for certainly it is better to know poverty in this world than damnation in the world to come."

Then the knight departed from her a second

The Vigils of the Dead

time, and went home all discomforted, recommending himself to God; but he came back before a fortnight was passed and prayed the lady anew that she would be his sweetheart. What need to set out all the words that passed between them? So many times did he come and go, and to so great straits was the lady brought both by reason of his gallantries and importunities, and also because she stood in much need of his help, that at last she was forced to yield all. And forgetting altogether how that she was the bride of Jesu Christ, she did make tryst with that knight to meet him in secret that they might exchange tokens of their love; for the ardour of his wooing was so great that it had altogether conquered her, and driven all else from her mind. And she took and showed him all the secret places of her demesne, saying:

"You will come to me by the orchard, and cross the little bridge, and enter into this oratory; there will I go so soon as it is night, and will wait you alone. And be sure that you are very secret, for none must know this thing."

The knight took but one kiss, the which the lady gave to him again, and he went away to await the hour that he had so long desired. And very long it seemed in coming; but if one cry Nowell long enough, Nowell at last is here, as the saw saith; and so it was with the day of this knight's joy. Then he disguised himself, that he might not be perceived; and he came alone to the garden that was about his

mistress's house, there to wait till night fell. And the lady made her household to go early to bed while yet it was light, for it was summer time; and she dressed herself in a plain cotta without kerchief and put a circlet of gold on her head, the which became her well. Moreover her tresses, that were of a golden colour exceeding fair, fell to her waist. Verily she was a right comely lady, most meet to be the friend of any lord. *The Vigils of the Dead*

Then when she was ready, this gentlewoman departed from her chamber and came into the oratory, where there was a counterpane of silken stuff spread upon the earth; and she sat on it. And inasmuch as the hour she had appointed to her lover was already come, she looked every way to find him; but she saw no one, neither within the chapel nor without, and she was much vexed at it.

"Benedicite!" said she. "Was ever so false and laggardly a knight as this? Is it for such a man that I imperil my immortal soul? He should have been waiting in this place, yet he comes not. Of a surety he shall never have my love!"

Then she rose up full of wrath, and went from that oratory and returned into her chamber and sat on her bed. But after a while she repented her of her impatience and thought she would go anew to the tryst, lest he might be there; for she was assured that he loved her well, and she feared that if he came and found her not he might kill himself for grief. And

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remembering that she had not said her prayers, the which she would never willingly neglect to do, she took her Book of Hours from off the coffer where it lay and went anew to the said chapel, and there kneeled down to make her orisons. The moon shone exceeding bright, and this lady thought that she could read in her prymer by its light, and say her prayers for God's love whiles she waited her lover. And she began to recite the Vigils of the Dead, for this was the day on which she was accustomed to say them; most piously commemorating her father and mother and all the faithful departed, that their pains might be eased.

And whilst she did thus, the knight her lover left his concealment, for he judged the hour to be ripe; and he came to the door of the oratory and there saw the lady kneeling. But greater things he saw also, by the which he was filled with holy dread; to wit the shining bodies of the dead, that had arisen from their graves and were there upon their knees, a multitude exceeding great, crying mercy to the lady as it seemed. Verily at this sight that knight was so amazed that he dared go neither forward nor back. He looked at the dead, that were both men and women, young and old, of many and diverse manners, and began to weep right bitterly; for he perceived that this lady his sweetheart did miracles before his eyes. And it seemed to him that he had greatly sinned in that he had constrained her to give him of her love, for very surely it is an evil thing to tempt

them that God would have to be His saints. And as he watched, being full of fear, the maiden made an end of her prayer and came to the *Requiescant in Pace*, the which is the conclusion of this Office. And when this she said, all the dead bowed down at her feet giving thanks with exceeding great devotion; and then they rose up and went very gently away. *The Vigils of the Dead*

Then did the lady straitway begin to recite the Compline of the Blessed Virgin Mary; and the knight her lover still watched her, for he dared not enter in, being full of awe. And it was not long before he saw another marvel, to wit the fairest company that ever was assembled under heaven; for there came into that oratory Our Lady Saint Mary, Mother of God, exceeding fair and clothed with so great a glory no tongue could tell it, and this gracious Virgin was encompassed by many angels, and seated on a throne most fairly wrought of precious stuffs, as are the works of Paradise. And ten or twelve angels upheld this throne, and thus did bear their Queen very gloriously; and after them came other that sang her praises. Of a surety, when they came into the chapel so great a light did shine there and so exceeding sweet and joyous was their song, that this knight could in no wise endure it, but he fell upon the earth in a swoon.

And presently, coming to himself, he lifted up his head and looked within the place discreetly; for now he thought he had been dreaming. And there he did see the light

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divine, that is the light of Our Lady, her angels, her archangels and virgins; and behind the Queen of Heaven two angels standing that held two burning candles, one to the right hand and one to the left. And in the midst of this glorious company was that gentlewoman his mistress, that most meekly and devoutly said her prayers; and when Compline was done, then said she the hymn, *Salve Regina.*

Then sang with her all the angels and archangels, saints and virgins, praising the Mother of God and crying:

"Salve Regina! Mater misericordiae,
Vita, dulcedo et spes nostra, salve!"

And when this song was finished the Queen of Heaven and all her angels went away, and left that gentlewoman her servant kneeling alone; and she knew not that the Host of Heaven had been there.

Then her lover, that had seen these marvels, being greatly afraid, entered into the oratory and fell down at her feet, saying, "Alas! most dear and sainted lady, I cry you mercy of my sin!" And he kissed her feet, weeping bitterly.

But the maiden, knowing not what ailed him, and being grieved against him because she had waited so long, said: "Oh, recreant knight and false lover! Are these the customs of chivalry, to come thus laggardly to the tryst? Go your ways, for you shall never have my troth. Here have I waited so long that I have said my Vigils

from *Placebo* to *Requiescant*, and after them the Compline of Our Lady. Call you this the ardour of true love?" *The Vigils of the Dead*

Whereto the knight, greatly taken up with those wonders that she knew not, answered her, "Alas, lady! I might not come to you, for I have seen this night great marvels and holy matters that were done here by your grace. And by this I know that you are in the keeping of God and of His angels, and that no mortal man may lay his hand on you."

Saith the lady, "What have you seen?"

The knight replied to her, "At the hour of the tryst I came to the door of this oratory, and there I saw you kneeling upon the earth and reading I know not what; and the light of the moon fell on the book wherein you read. And because of this matter which you did read and recite, there came about you the shining bodies of the holy dead, so many that this place was full of them. And they kneeled with clasped hands before you, and so did stay a long while; verily because of them I dared not enter in. And at last you said somewhat that I might not hear, and they bowed themselves before you right humbly, and so did go their ways."

When the lady heard these things she was full of dread, and she began to praise God with tears. For well she knew that these souls had been called about her for her defence, by the virtue of those Vigils she said, by the which labour she did lighten their purgatorial pains: and she gave thanks to Our Lord Jesu Christ

The Vigils of the Dead

that of His mercy it had been permitted to these holy souls to guard their friend from sin. Then, when she had so done, the knight saith to her:

"This is not all, for when that the dead had gone from you I saw yet holier things, to wit, that this chapel was altogether filled with ghostly light, and in that light there came God's Mother, the Virgin Mary, who did descend from Heaven accompanied by angels and archangels and holy virgins, the which were a long time with you whiles you prayed. And at the end, when they must depart, the angels and virgins sang with you, lauding the Queen of Heaven with sweet sound and joyous melody, and then did go back to Heaven, leaving you here alone. I suppose no man ever saw the Mother of God better than I have done this night. And because of this, I am minded to repent me of all sinful desire, and to offer to her my body and soul; and for this I will get me to an hermitage there to serve her. And you, lady, my very sweet friend and dear mistress, think on your soul, for verily it belongs altogether to that Lady that has guarded your maidenhead this night. That love which I did ask of you I give you back again; but I will preserve your lands from them that would despoil you, that if it please you, you may offer them to God."

Then he went his way; and the lady, that was full of contrition because she had been tempted to the breaking of her vow, gave thanks with exceeding fervour to that compassionate Mother, who of her infinite mercy had

kept her poor servant from this sin. And she was shriven as soon as might be, for she greatly desired to make confession, fleeing all worldly pride and vain deceit; in that now she knew she had about her a fairer meinie than earth could furnish—to wit, the Queen of Angels and the souls of all good Christians, that are ever by the side of them that pray. *The Vigils of the Dead*

And with those riches that the knight her lover restored to her according to his word, this gentlewoman did presently build a fair abbey, and put many nuns therein. She herself also, having taken anew the vow of chastity, did live there in religion more than twenty years, and the fame of her holiness went through all the land and won many souls for God. Night and day did she laud her glorious patroness Saint Mary, making sweet hymns in her honour. Nor did she forget to entreat God for the souls of the faithful departed, that He would ease their pains and bring them to celestial joy; for these had helped their friend in the hour of her temptation, and kept her from the snare of Sathan to bring her to the perdurable blessedness of them that look on the Eternal Light.

REQUIEM AETERNAM DONA EIS, DOMINE, ET LUX PERPETUA LUCEAT EIS!

THE CHILD VOWED TO THE DEVIL

OF A LITTLE BOY, THAT WAS DEDICATE TO THE DEVIL AT THE HOUR OF HIS BIRTH; AND HOW THE VIRGIN MARY SAVED HIM

The Child vowed to the Devil

THERE lived on a time in the land of France a certain noble lady, that was joined in marriage to a very valiant knight: and they dwelt long together in much harmony, being greatly beloved by all, for they were most prudent and charitable folk. And this lady, having borne her husband many fair children, both sons and daughters, the which she bred in God's love, did very ardently desire to give herself to Our Lady Saint Mary, living to her life's end in honourable chastity for her sake. Therefore she made a vow to the intent that no more children would she have, for she wished to devote herself altogether to matters of religion; and she held that the rearing of babes but hindered the advancement of the soul.

Nevertheless, a while after, this gentlewoman found that she must have a child. Then she was greatly vexed, for she did not desire it, deeming that it would keep her from Our Lady's service; and she complained right bitterly to her husband and also to the women of her

The Child vowed to the Devil

household. Yea, so angry she was, that when her time came and she gave birth to a fair son she said in her wrath that the Devil might take this baby if he would, for nought did she care what became of it. But the child flourished exceedingly and increased in beauty; wherefore in a little while his mother hated him not as she had thought to do, but loved him well, as a mother should love her child. And he grew and prospered, being a very gentle boy, so full of grace and prudence that all were astonished at it. He went early to school, and learned to read right quickly; never was seen a child so industrious and so meek.

But his mother, remembering how that she had given him to the Devil when he was born, wept often to see her little son; for now she loved him with all her heart, and greatly she feared that the Enemy would take him from her. But she hid this matter in her heart and revealed it to none, save to the glorious Virgin, whom she entreated in her prayers. Nevertheless, Sathan, that forgets no sin, remembered the promise that she had made to him; and when the child was near twelve years old, he appeared before that poor mother, more ugly and terrible than mind can conceive. And he said:

"Have a care, madame, of the child that I have left in your keeping, for within three years of this day you must deliver him up to me body and soul, as you did promise and give at the hour of his birth. Therefore forget it not, but

keep him for me safely, for he is my chattel, the which, if you give it not willingly, I shall take by force; nor will anything that you can do save him out of my hand." *The Child vowed to the Devil*

Then the Devil returned to Hell, and that poor gentlewoman had such grief of his words that she could scarcely bear it; but from this day forth wept and made her moan without ceasing. And when her little boy came each evening from his school she received him with tears, and the more she looked at him the more sorrow she had; nor could she hear any speak of him without torment. And at this the child was greatly astonished, for he could not understand the cause of it, and he asked her, saying:

"Fair mother, why do you weep so much? Is there nought I can do to ease you? Verily, my heart is very sad because of this grief of yours. My father has much joy of me and plays with me exceeding gladly, and so do all the people; but you, mother, sigh so piteously when you see me that I go heavily for it. Do you see aught in me that displeases you, or is there any devoir I have left undone? Tell me, sweet mother, what ails you, for I will do anything for your comfort that I can."

But the lady would tell him nothing, for she wished not that he should live three years in misery, knowing that which must be. But at last, because the time drew very near when he must leave her, so great was her grief that she could hide it no more; and at the instance of her son, that was now a fair youth well grown,

The Child vowed to the Devil

she told him all the truth—how she had given him to the Devil at the hour of his birth, and how the day was near when he must be delivered into Sathan's hand, and be carried to Hell, body and soul.

When the child knew this, he had great dread, as well he might, for it was grievous news; and he wept and moaned right bitterly, and implored the Blessed Virgin Mary with all his heart, that she would give him counsel in his need. And having considered with himself what were the best thing to do to save his soul that was so nearly lost, he, being advised by that Lady, and knowing that in his father's house he could find no shelter from the Fiend that sought him, rose up one night and adventured forth alone and full of grief, quitting his father and mother and all the joys of his home that he loved. Then he wandered through the land, as a palmer might do, ceasing not to ask counsel of the wisest clerks he could find, for he hoped that he might discover a remedy for his misfortune; but none could he find that had the wit to advise him to his satisfaction.

At last, when he had journeyed a long while, he came to Rome, and there did see our Holy Father the Pope: to him he told his grief without concealment. And the Pope, when he heard it, knew not what to say, for this matter was too hard for him; nevertheless, being filled with compassion for this innocent boy that stood in such peril for his mother's fault, he wrote a letter which he gave to the young man, saying:

"Fair son, no help can I give you but this parchment, wherewith you must pass oversea, and go to the Patriarch of Jerusalem, for he is the wisest man in all the world. To him you shall tell all this matter, doubting nothing; and, if he cannot bring you from it safely, then have you no hope save in God." *The Child vowed to the Devil*

The child took the parchment and went his way greatly sorrowing, for small hope did he have of this journey, and now but a little while was left before the Fiend must take him. And entering into a ship, he set out for the Holy Land; and he had great torment upon the sea, so that often he cried to God that He would take away his life and end his pain. But he came at last to land, and to Jerusalem; and there he sought out the Patriarch and gave to him the letter of the Pope.

When this holy man was acquainted with the matter, he was much amazed; and being greatly pitiful of this poor child he called together many wise men of the city that he might have their counsel. These, when they were come and had heard the adventure, wept for compassion, gazing on the fair boy that so soon must go to Hell. And each said:

"Verily God will be but neglectful if He let this child be lost for his mother's sin; for it were exceeding grievous that so sweet and good a boy be given into Sathan's hand. Shall none be found that can intercede for him with Our Lady the Merciful Mother, that she may save him from this fate?"

The Child vowed to the Devil

Then the Patriarch pondered the matter a long while; and so doing there came at last into his mind a certain hermit, a very holy man, that lived in such a state of perfectness that the blessed angels were accustomed to visit him and speak with him face to face. Yea, and each day an angel brought him from Paradise a loaf of bread, white as snow, wherewith he was nourished; for no other food did he have in the wilderness where he dwelt. And the Patriarch, because he was very familiar with this holy hermit, called the child to him and gave him certain letters, saying:

"Fair and sweet son, you shall go to this hermit, with whom the Holy Ghost most surely is, and you shall tell him all your grief; for so holy is he, that if he pray God for you, very certainly you shall be saved. But the way that you must traverse to come to his cell is long harsh and difficult, for he lives in the midst of the desert that is two days' journey from hence."

Then the boy departed and went alone into the desert, weeping sore and full of dread; for now but one day remained before the Fiend should claim him, and he feared he might not come to the hermit in time, but must encounter his Enemy in the wilderness alone. And as he went, he cried to Our Lord Jesu Christ and to His Mother, Madame Saint Mary, that they would be with him to keep his body from Hell.

Then God, Who had care of the child, as He hath of all poor pilgrims in the world, helped him; and so well he sped, that he came straight

to the place where that holy hermit was before the day was done. And it happened on this day, that the angel brought the holy man two loaves of bread instead of one, by the which he knew that he should have a guest; wherefore he was exceeding joyous, giving praise and thanks to God.

The Child vowed to the Devil

And a little after the angel had departed came the young man, and gave the hermit those letters which the Patriarch of Jerusalem had sent. When he had read them, that good man was so greatly amazed that no words could he say; but weeping full piteously for the grief of it he led the child into his little chapel, and there did exhort and advise him that he should set himself to prayer forthwith. And greatly he marvelled that Sathan should have power over one so simple sweet and fair.

"Sir," said the child, "for Christ's sake pray for me; for I am so full of fear and dread that I tremble in every limb, and cannot make my orisons as I should."

Replied the hermit: "That will I surely do, but you also must call on God as best you can. Remember also to entreat the glorious Virgin, for verily she is Lady over Heaven and Hell, and there is no door so strong that she cannot open it. So great is the power of her might that where she is the Enemy can never come; therefore call on her with all your heart and doubt nothing, for she is a Mother right full of mercy and love."

Then when he had so exhorted him they supped together on the angels' bread, that is

The Child vowed to the Devil

sweeter than honey and whiter than snow, and the hermit comforted the child as well as he could. And after this they betook them again to the chapel, and there said Matins and Lauds with great devotion. Then the hermit, meekly kneeling on the earth, did pray heartily for the child till day came, with tears and sighs recommending him to God and Our Lady. And it was Easter Eve, wherefore, so soon as dawn was near, he vested himself that he might say Mass right early, in honour of Jesu Christ our Lord, Who did this day conquer Sathan and rise triumphant from the dead. And the young man desired greatly that he might be commemorated in this blessed Sacrifice, and also make his communion that he might have his Saviour with him; for he was in much fear lest the Devil should surprise him unprotected and fetch him suddenly away.

Then the hermit, for greater safety, took and placed the child between himself and the altar, for there, he thought, the Fiend could no wise come; and holding him thus securely, he began the saying of the Mass. But the Enemy, that hateth all innocent children, had long desired this day, for he was exceeding impatient to have possession of the boy; and when he saw that the holy hermit would give the Body of Christ to the child, he was greatly vexed, in that he can in no wise touch them that are made partakers of God's Passion. Therefore, so soon as the Paternoster was said, he came quickly and seized the boy from before the altar, despite all the

hermit could do to preserve him. And he carried him through the air incontinent to Hell.

The Child vowed to the Devil

Then was the holy man altogether beside himself, seeing his endeavour put to nought; and he cried to the Virgin Mary with tears, saying:

"Ah, Mother of God! awake! awake! for it seemeth you have slept too long this morn. Shall one that was in your guardianship be thus destroyed? This child, that was committed to your keeping, hath been taken from before your Son's altar by the Enemy, and verily he shall be lost both body and soul if you succour him not as quickly as you can."

How greatly powerful are the prayers of the holy! Right quickly did the Queen of Heaven come to the help of that child when she heard the hermit that asked it. And she appeared straitway before Sathan even as he came with his victim to Hell's gate, and took the young man from his hands without parley, and put him back in the place whence he had come: namely, between the hermit and the altar of her Son Our Lord. More quickly than tongue can say she did it, so that when the holy man, that ceased not in his singing of the Mass, said "Pax Domini sit semper vobiscum," the boy replied to him, "Et cum spiritu tuo."

And the hermit, hearing it, cried and said *Deo gratias!* and also *Ave, Regina Coelorum!* for he was altogether filled with joy; and he gave very sweetly to the child the Holy Communion of the Body of Our Lord, the which he received with great devotion. Then, when Mass

The Child vowed to the Devil

was done, and he had made his humble thanksgiving, that young man told the hermit all the adventure, how that the Devil had borne him to Hell, and there he had seen much folk in great torment, more than he could count.

"But," said he, "before I could pass the gateway, that was very dark and foul, Our Blessed Lady came from Paradise right swiftly, and she drew me out from between the hands of Sathan, and carried me in her arms through the air, and set me again in safety before this altar where I am."

Then said the hermit: "Fair son, this day the Holy Spirit of God hath been with you. Have a care, therefore, that henceforth you serve Him and His Mother Saint Mary with all your heart, for it is by their grace alone that you have been saved out of Sathan's power."

"Sir," said the child, "Our Lady has put into my heart so great and loving ardour, that more I could not desire to be her servant. Therefore I pray you tell me those things that she would have me do, for in this henceforth is all my joy."

Then the holy man did teach him very gently the knowledge of which he had need, and so greatly was the child filled with burning love toward God that he would have stayed all his days in that desert to serve Him in the solitary life. But it might not be, for his parents had need of him, and moreover he was very young.

Therefore he presently took leave of the hermit, and went his way to Jerusalem; and there he rendered thanks to the Patriarch,

telling him the mercy that he had had. And after these things, taking ship, he came to his home, and to his friends, that long had mourned him for lost. And when his mother saw her child all safe and sound, she had exceeding great joy, and did sing, laugh, and make feast, giving thanks to God and the Blessed Virgin in that he was not destroyed because of her sin.

The Child vowed to the Devil

And being greatly desirous to serve God and Saint Mary all his life, the child was made clerk, and presently was hallowed priest. And he had much joy of Our Lady's friendship, for she filled his heart with so pure and fervent a love that compared with it all earthly pleasures seemed but bitterness; and he daily increased in wisdom and in understanding, as her lovers ever do. Long did he live in this joy, and did great things for her worship; and at last she took him to the blessedness of Heaven, where all her children have their place.

Now this should be an ensample to all parents, by the which they may know how greatly perilous it is to dedicate their children to the Devil; for he who so doeth, giveth the Fiend in Hell power over these innocents, the which is greatly displeasing to God and to His Saints. And further we may know by this history how that it is a great thing and sure to call on Madame Saint Mary in our need; for she hath truly great power to deliver her friends from Death and Sathan, and her mercy and lovingkindness knows no end.

SPONSAE CHRISTI

HERE WE TELL HOW OUR LADY DOTH CHERISH HER DAUGHTERS IN RELIGION, THAT ARE BETROTHED TO BE THE BRIDES OF HER DEAR SON

Sponsae Christi

SAINT MARY, Queen of Virgins, hath a very special love for those children of hers that serve her in the cloistered life, having given their troth to Jesu Christ her Son; and she watches over them right tenderly and shields them from danger if she can, that they may every one come safely to their heavenly nuptials, as did the blessed Saint Catherine. Yea! she rebukes them in their wrongdoing and strengthens them in their prayers, nor will she let any that have given themselves into her keeping escape out of her hand.

Many are the snares that Sathan sets to tempt Our Lady's daughters from their home. For those that live in convents are, as it were, a company kept safe in a strong castle that is defended by the chivalry of God, where none may reach them from without to wound or slay; therefore will he use much guile to bring them from it, and set them again in the battlefield of the world. And he tempts them thereto

Sponsae Christi

with earthly thoughts and vain desire; yet Saint Mary is ever at their side to keep them from his hand, if they do but remember to call upon her name.

There was a certain young sister that dwelt in an abbey of nuns in England; and she was exceeding fair of face, a most sweet and comely maid. Now because of her great beauty, a knight of the neighbourhood had long and ardently tempted this little sister with his love, that he might bring her from her cloister and lead her in the evil paths of sin; and being very young and ignorant, knowing little of the bliss of Heaven but greatly desiring the joys of our poor earth, she listened to his words. Then, because he was a courteous knight and debonair, she became inflamed with love for him, and forgat her profession and that Bridegroom she had wed, longing only that she might escape out of the convent and have joy of her lover in the world.

Therefore one night when all her sisters slept, this nun entered very discreetly into the cell of the sister sacristan, and took from off the hook that was above her head the key of the convent door that hung thereon; for she would fly to her lover that awaited her without the gate with promise of much happiness. Then, having taken the key, full swiftly she descended into the cloister, and would go to the door that was therein. And the night was exceeding dark, for the which cause this young religious was full of dread, being in the cloister alone; for she knew that God was not with her.

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Now there stood in the said cloister an image of the Blessed Virgin Mary, that was there set up to watch over the comings and goings of her daughters therein; and when she passed this image, that nun, because she was accustomed so to do, tarried and saluted it very devoutly, saying, "Ave Maria! gratia plena, Dominus tecum!" for she loved that Lady well. And also she said, "Saint Mary, keep me!" being greatly afraid because of the darkness and the solitary place.

Then, when she had done her prayer, she kissed the earth and hastened very quickly to the door; for she was much impatient to be gone to the knight her lover, before her sisters should discover her flight. But when she was come to the door, and had taken the key that she had hid in the fold of her sleeve that she might unlock it, behold, she could in no wise make the said key to enter into the lock. And she tried this way and that, but still it refused her, as if some barrier stood between. All night she laboured to open the door, but nought could accomplish; for so soon as the key was come near to its keyhole, there it stayed and would not go in. And she was much perplexed, for she could not understand the matter. And so long she travailed, that at last dawn came, and fearing lest she be discovered, she went back full softly into the convent, and laid the key in its place whilst yet the sacristan slept; and she entered into her cell that she had thought not to see again, and laid her down upon her bed and

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wept bitterly, for she was greatly amazed and much sorrowful because she could not open the door.

And the second night, so soon as it was dark, that sister rose up again and took the key from its place, and went down into the cloister; and passing by the image of Saint Mary, she saluted it right courteously as she had done afore. And all night she strove to unlock the door, but naught could accomplish, for still the key refused her; and she was wrathful, for she feared lest her lover grow weary, waiting so long. But when it was dawn still she stood within the cloister; and she went back to her cell full heavily and laid her down.

And the third night, as she went through the cloister, being full of melancholy because her travail seemed in vain, and now but little hope did she have that the lock would yield, she cried to the Blessed Virgin, and said:

"Alas! dear Lady, what must I do? And what is the magic that constrains me thus? Verily, small skill should it need for them that have the key to open the door that leads unto the world; yet for all my toil I may not accomplish it."

Then went she to the door, and because she was now greatly impatient and lifted up with a passion of love for that knight her betrayer that had waited two nights in vain, with all her strength she strove to force her key into the lock. Nevertheless, she could not do it, for when it approached the keyhole there it stayed,

and press how she might it would not go in. *Sponsae Christi*
And as she so laboured in vain, behold, of a sudden, she saw a hand, exceeding white fair and gracious, that was spread over the keyhole to cover it; so that with all her travail she might in no wise force the key into the lock till she had pierced and wounded the fair hand that was between. And light came from this hand, that shone in the darkness; and she saw how that it was right cruelly torn and bruised by the great key that she did press into its tender palm.

When this she saw, much fear and dread fell upon that nun, and she raised her eyes, that had afore been upon her toil so that she saw naught else; and there she beheld the glorious form of an heavenly Lady, that stood very meekly at her side.

Then this holy one spake, and saith to her: "What would you do, my daughter? Would you force your key through my hand? Verily, these three nights past you have done me great grief and anguish; yet have I not forsaken you, for that a little while since you did implore me to keep you safe and sound."

Saith the sister: "Let be, let be, gracious Lady, your poor child and servant, that I may unlock the door; for my lover awaits me beyond it, and I am greatly impatient to be gone."

The Mother of Mercy replied to her: "And is your lover to whom you would hasten more wise, more sweet, and more fair than my Son your Bridegroom? Think, my daughter, on

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your vow of virginity, for this is a flower that, if any pluck it, you shall never have again. And because I would keep this flower to bloom in the garden of Paradise, therefore I have laid my hand, that you have wounded so cruelly for your desire, before the lock that should open to you the gate of Hell."

Then that poor sister fell down at the feet of the glorious Virgin, weeping right bitterly and bewailing her sin, and how that she had hurt God's Mother thereby. And that compassionate Lady raised her up with exceeding courtesy and lovingkindness; and she carried her in her arms from the cloister and laid her in her bed in her cell. And the key she took in the hand that it had so grievously wounded, and hung by the head of the sacristan whence it had been withdrawn: that none might know how that one of her daughters had so nearly escaped out of her Mother's hands.

Now I would have you to know that for these benefits that the Lady Mary doth to us, she would have her daughters do her certain courtesies again; and especially does she love that we should keep her in mind of those joys and dolours of her earthly pilgrimage, the which mysteries her psalter, that is the holy Rosary, recites. Verily, they that so praise her, recollecting the gladness she had when Saint Gabriel did salute her, and when that our Saviour Jesu lay a Baby in her arms, shall have great gueridon; for the joys and sorrows of Our Lady are every one jewels of great price.

THE MIRACLES OF OUR LADY

Sponsae Christi

There was a very pious lady that lived in religion, having taken on her the rule of an anchoress; and she had a little servant that brought her meat and raiment to the anchorage in which she dwelt, that was set within the churchyard wall, for because of her profession she might not stir therefrom. And because she loved this little maid, yea, over and above that lovingkindness that she had for all the children of God, this lady would teach her somewhat of religion, and of the holy courtesy that she should show our Blessed Lady, that thereby she might increase in godliness. But the child had no scholarship, to read or count withal; therefore her mistress taught her very sweetly how that she might worship God's Mother by the recital of her Fifteen Mysteries, telling them upon her fingers the better to remember how they came. Thus would she make her to say the prayers of the Five Joys, to wit, the Angelic Salutation, the Visitation of Our Lady, and the most blessed Birth of Jesu Christ her Son, and also His Presentation in the Temple of His Father, and the hour when His Mother did find Him disputing with the doctors therein; and whiles she said them she counted on her finger-tips. In like manner, she would tell upon the middle joints Saint Mary's Dolours, that she had for the Passion of her Child; and her Triumphs she would count upon the knuckles of her hand. Thus those fingers wherewith this little servant did her devoirs in the world became also the instrument of her ghostly duties, and

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she carried upon her body the chaplet of her faith.

And it happened after a while that the child found the way of death and entered therein, and very sweetly fell asleep. Then was that lady anchoress her mistress full of grief, for she loved her well; and she ceased not to weep and mourn her night and day, and pray that her soul might be at peace.

And when that she had so done a long while, and would not be comforted, behold the Blessed Virgin Mary, who appeared to her and said: "My sister, why do you weep?"

Answered the anchoress: "Lady, I weep for my little servant that is dead."

Saith the Mother of God: "Weep not, but rather rejoice; for here is my little daughter your servant, that has much gladness in the love divine. For because of that loving courtesy which you did teach her toward me, she has great reward, and being with me is blessed for ever more."

Then that holy woman looked, and beheld by the side of the Queen of Angels the little servant whom she loved; and the child held out toward her the hand wherewith she had made count of her orisons, and lo! on every joint thereof a fair ring there was, all set with precious gems. And they shone with a celestial radiance, making glad the heart, as do those Fifteen Mysteries that are set as an heavenly treasure in the Rosary that is Our Lady's Crown.

Now that we may know how great a matter

it is rightly to understand the recital of this devotion, I will tell here of a certain nun whose brother, that was a knight, was taken in battle and thrown into prison by the tyrant that was his foe. And when his sister heard of it, she was full of grief, for she loved him well. Then, because she had a great devotion for the glorious Virgin, and trusted altogether in her might, she threw herself down upon the ground before the Blessed Mother of God, and entreated her with tears and lamentations that she would come to her brother's relief. And her sadness was so great, that no other thing would come to her mind but the griefs that Lady had, to wit, the Passion of her Son Our Lord, and all His bitter pains; and therefore she implored her in this wise, saying: *Sponsae Christi*

"Oh, sweet Lady, Queen of Angels, whose only Son did die, as Scripture saith, 'ad praedicarem captivis indulgentiam, et clausis apertionem,' being the Redeemer of our bondage; remember now, I pray, how that you did stand weeping before His cross in misery, how that you heard the sighs of His anguish and could help Him not! Remember how His sacred flesh was torn with wounds, and how that your soul was torn thereby! Remember the hours wherein your Son hung upon the tree for the healing of human pain! Lo! even as you were intolerably grieved for His torments, so is my heart cruelly torn for my brother's captivity. By your sorrows, therefore, oh pitiful Lady, I confide my sorrows unto you; and I offer to

Sponsae Christi

you, oh Virgin of Virgins, my contrite soul to be a partaker in your griefs for evermore, if you will but bring my brother out of the prison wherein he lies."

Now as thus she spoke in her misery, there appeared before that nun the glorious Queen of Heaven, Mother of God; the which saith to her:

"Daughter, why do you call on me in this manner? Why do you invoke my sorrows and tears, reminding me only of the death of my dear Son and all the anguish that I then endured? Why do you not rather entreat me in the name of that Ineffable Joy which was shed abroad through all the world for the redemption of man in the hour when I gave Him birth? For it is greatly pleasing to me that these glad mysteries be kept in remembrance, and I love very dearly all my children that bring them often to my mind, and will give them for my joy's sake all the happiness I can. But you, daughter, were so greatly taken up with your own grief that you thought not of my gladness; nevertheless, for the fervour of your prayer I will bring your brother out of the durance in which he is. But that he may have his freedom, you must give your soul in ransom into my hands, and I will bring it out of the prison of the world to that place where it shall be purged of the sin of melancholy and learn the gladness of the saints; the which, heeding not their pains and travail, rejoice without ceasing in the joy divine."

This said, that Blessed Lady vanished away ; and the nun was alone, for the vision was at an end. And at the same time, the Queen of Heaven came to the prison where that knight was captive, and she opened the door of it, and took him by the hand, and led him forth very sweetly, saying : *Sponsae Christi*

" Come ! for I have received the price of your ransom and you are free."

And he came forth full of joy, and went straightway to his sister in religion, the which received him very gladly, giving thanks to the glorious Virgin because she had heard her daughter's prayer. And at once she lay down upon her bed exceeding meekly, and desired that she might be shriven ; for she knew that she must die. Then came all the convent, making great moan, for they loved this sister well ; and they let fetch a priest that she might be confessed, and partake of her Saviour to strengthen her upon the way. And so soon as she had that Blessed Food, she gave her soul very humbly into Our Lady's hands that required it ; and was departed out of this world to that place where her spirit should be cleansed.

Now by this ensample we may learn in what manner the Blessed Virgin Mother of God would have us call upon her ; how that she would have us remember the Angelic Salutation, and put her in frequent mind of her Son's Ineffable Birth. For greatly does it pleasure her to recollect how in that hour she heard the choirs of angels that hymned her, and also the

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rejoicings of the shepherds, and the kings that came from Chaldea led by a star. And we should also commemorate and applaud the triumphs of the glorious Resurrection, and the forty Sacred Days wherein her Son did walk on earth. For she loves to ponder the glory of that Redemption which she did bring from Heaven into the world; and they that are her friends will ever keep it in her mind; for inasmuch as they do celebrate these joyous mysteries so, by their might, will she bring them to a perdurable joy.

THE HOSTAGE

HOW A POOR WOMAN THAT WAS A WIDOW DID TAKE FROM GOD'S MOTHER HER CHILD, FOR HER OWN THAT WAS CONDEMNED TO BE HANGED

The Hostage

IN the city of Rome there lived a poor labouring man, the which had to wife a woman of good countenance that lived as religion ordaineth us, doing her duty towards all. These two gained their bread by the labour of their hands as best they might; but a child they had that was all unlike them, for he was of a nature so evil and perverse that he would learn no trade nor craft, nor do aught that a good child should do. And the older he grew the greater grew sinfulness within him: he sought the company of the idlers and the libertines, and of those that take their ease in taverns, and no woman was safe from his insults, were she wife or maid. Thus growing in evil, as those must ever do that will not grow in good, he became at last a robber and a murderer, feared of all in the night, fearing all in the day; for well he knew that should the law but overtake him, he would go not to prison but incontinent be hung for his deserts.

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Now his father fell sick and died, and therefore must his mother, that was made a widow, get her livelihood alone; for her son helped her not at all, but that which he gained by villainy he spent in villainy again. Therefore this poor woman would earn her bread by spinning and by such travail as she might, and hard indeed did she labour from dawn to eve. But on a Saturday she would not work at all, because it is Our Lady's day, for she had been accustomed all her life to serve and honour Saint Mary with exceeding great devotion, being bred to pious uses when that she was yet a child. And near to the place where she lived there was a great and fair church of Our Lady, and therein an image of God's Mother set upon an altar, in the likeness of a woman that nursed her child. It was finely gilt and of right fair device. This poor woman loved that image so well that she could not take her heart from it, but whether she were at her prayers or at her spinning, she yearned with a great desire toward that Mother who held alway her Baby at her breast.

"Even thus," said she, "did I hold my boy, that was once but simple and weak." For truly every mother has once nursed the Holy Child.

And every Saturday, because of this devotion of hers, she made herself ready at the hour of None and came to the church with a gift of green herbage, the which she took and spread before the altar. And she was accustomed also to offer two candles, having fasted the Friday on bread and water that she might give them. The other

women, her neighbours, mocked at her, for knowing that she lived in poverty they held that she was a fool and wastrel thus to do. Nevertheless, so soon as None sounded on Saturday, she lit her two candles and placed them before the image of the Virgin Mary, whom she honoured with words of very loving devotion, and the grasses she spread upon the floor; and there she would kneel at prayer before that glorious Lady, nor would she move from her place until nightfall, no, not for any necessity. Verily, she was a woman of pure and spiritual heart, and God did great favours to her, and showed Himself to her, as He doeth to all them that love Him truly and serve Him well. Many a time did she feel about herself all the sweetness of Paradise, so that had she done what she would, she had stayed for ever with such blessed thoughts. *The Hostage*

Yet was this widow greatly condemned of her neighbours, that held her to be a dissembler and an hypocrite, for they said: "Better doth her spinning wheel profit her than her prayers, for God feedeth her not, nor payeth her any wage for these hours that she gives Him." Thus do the wicked alway toward them that would do well, for the fool ever willeth that all men should be like to him. But the wise man heedeth not his words, and for his part the wicked heedeth not the words of the good. Thus doth each according to his part, one good and the other evil.

This wise woman did well, thus to serve Madame Saint Mary in faith and in peace, and

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greatly did she profit of her love. For it fell out on a certain Saturday, as she was at prayer before the image, that her son, the which lived so evil a life and governed himself so ill, was taken for thieving. Then was the reward that his acts had earned meted to him quickly, for the provost of the city took him, and tied him to a horse's tail, and so dragged him through the streets toward the gallows, that there he might be hanged. And great company of people came after, mocking and reviling him, and shouting one to another of his capture full gladly, for he had been greatly feared.

Then one cried to other, saying: "Is not this the son of that old witch that prays in the church continually?"

And others answered them: "Yea, and well have her prayers been answered. Great joy must she have this day of her devotion, when her child, that is all she has, is dragged to the gibbet!"

And whenas the company that was with the young man came past the church where she was, an old woman that was one of her neighbours saw her through the door, where she knelt and made her supplications before Our Lady's image: and she called her, saying: "Hay, gossip, come hither!"

When that she had come, "Hahay!" said that neighbour, "dost know what has befallen? What a miserable woman art thou, and how little does God love thee! Verily, thou hast grief and ill-fortune in all things. Behold, at

this moment thy dear son is dragged through the streets to the gallows, and there shall he be hanged without delay, for the people are inflamed against him; and whilst thy child goes to his damnation (for very surely Sathan waits his soul) thou kneelest before this dead image as if it might aid thee! Now give up this folly of thine, and this wasting of thy substance, for thou seest thou gettest no help, but rather hast lost all thy care and pains." *The Hostage*

This poor mother, hearing thus of her child's extremity, felt her heart so greatly moved with grief and anguish that she knew not what to do: for though her son had brought her much wretchedness, still she loved him, being even as other mothers are, the which are turned no wit from their great love because their children be perverse. Nevertheless, though her pain was exceeding great, she hid that which was in her heart discreetly. "For," said she, "if I go out from the church and cry my sorrow in the streets, all the people will rail against me and set upon me to hurt me, and I shall accomplish nothing. It is better that I stay here where I can have the ear of our Merciful Mother, that can do all things if she will."

Therefore did she remain standing before the image of Our Lady, gazing upon it and thinking full bitterly of that child of hers that was in peril, and of her helplessness. And as she so stood and so gazed there came into her heart so great an ardour of supplication and of

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love that she burst into tears and flung herself down before that image, crying :

"Dear Lady, Holy Mary ! I ask your help in my necessity ! Lady, who didst conceive the Son of God in pure virginity (and this is true, I know it well), keep now for His sake Who did save the thief of Calvary, the soul and body of my poor son, that I have conceived and borne. Lady, you knew the death of your Son: will you not give me for His sake the life of mine?"

But the image was silent.

Then cried she again with a loud voice ; and so greatly was she moved by her passion of asking that she was near to swoon.

"Sweet Lady ! " she said, "can you not do it ? Shall my child be lost ? Not so, for I will in no wise consent to it. My very sweet Friend and dear sister in motherhood, child I must have, for I cannot live without it. Therefore give back to me my son that is lost, or verily I will take your Baby from you, and will hold Him as hostage and pledge in place of mine."

And this spoken she seized the Child of Our Lady where it was in the arms of that image, and with great force she tore it from its place and held it in her arms full closely, and,

"Lady," said she, "let my child come back to me, or give me your Son in his place ; for truly He gave Himself for the comforting of the sorrowful, and died that sinners might be

saved. Therefore will I hold Him as hostage for this poor child of mine." *The Hostage*

Now the Blessed Virgin Mary, who saw that the young man, the son of the widow, went to his death, would not suffer this disgrace; for she could in no wise endure to go without her Baby, and further this poor woman served her well. Therefore did she come from Heaven full swiftly, that she might save this sinner and have her Child again; and when the young man was come to the gallows whither he was led, and when that the hangman already had put the rope about his neck, and he was uplifted in the air that all the people might see how he died—at that hour great miracle was wrought before them that stood there, and he was brought alive out of his extremity. For it was seen of all that this malefactor, as he hung on the gibbet, was lifted up, all bound and helpless, and was carried through the air, and so out of their sight. Of a surety it was Our Lady that succoured him and had him in her keeping, but none saw her: for the light that was about her was so fair and bright that they could not endure its shining to gaze upon it, and in that shining she was hid. And she brought the young man safe and sound into the precinct of that church where his poor mother was, that still held the Christ-child to her bosom, and kept Him from His Mother's arms because of the rage and anguish she was in for her own child's sake.

Then came to her that young man her son, whom Saint Mary had brought hither, and he

The Hostage put his arms about his mother, and drew her to him, and said :

"Fair and dear mother, leave, leave this Child Whom you withhold from His mother's arms, and be at peace ; for the Mother of God hath most marvellously succoured me for your prayers, and that she may have again her Baby that you have held hostage for my soul. Yea, she hath brought me from the power of Sathan, though my bed was already made in hell, for well I saw it as I hung ; but the Holy Virgin would not suffer my damnation, and she took me from the hand of them that had seized me, even from the clutches of the Enemy, who called me to Hell for the sins I had done. I had put myself within his power, but the Lady whom you serve has ransomed me. Therefore have I vowed my life to her, to do her bidding without fantasy, and ever will I remain her loyal and devoted servant ; for though great has been my sin, greater far shall be my labour in well-doing. And it is in my mind that I would enter an abbey and put on me the habit of religion, the better to be taught the love of God ; thither will I straitway go to make my peace with Him, if that it be your will."

"Of a good heart, dear son," said his mother, "for I am altogether of your mind."

Then this good woman did bow down her body before the altar, and with clasped hands gave thanks to God and to His glorious Mother, for she was filled with an exceeding joy. And so greatly did she weep for the

delight she had, that the ground was wet with her tears. "For," said she, "my son that was lost is found." *The Hostage*

Then went she out from the church with her child, that had escaped this great peril both of body and of soul, and they betook them to an abbey; and the Abbot received the young man much willingly, and vested him as was right. And the mother went back to her house, praising God; nor did she forget her duty, for she served the Lord Christ and His sweet Mother ever more devoutly till her death.

And her son governed himself so well in that abbey to which he was come, that he was made priest, and at last Abbot. And all his life he loved Our Lady and served her with a special diligence, so that all who knew him held him to be a very holy man. And when he had lived many years he went from this world, and Saint Mary led him straight to Heavenly Syon, and there was he crowned exceeding gloriously by her dear Son, even Our Lord Jesu Christ, "qui dixit: Non veni vocare justos, sed peccatores ad poenitentiam."

OUR LADY OF THE LINTEL

AND HEREIN OF A MONK THAT WAS A PAINTER, THE WHICH PAINTED THE DEVIL AS FOULLY AS HE KNEW HOW

Our Lady of the Lintel

SAINT MARY, that is our dear Lady, had in the city of Auxerre a great and splendid abbey. Therein were many monks, good and devout men, that most heartily served God and His glorious Mother; for they kept their cloister and their rule, and were of an honest and an holy life. And the church of this abbey was made rich with paintings and images exceeding fair, for many skilled craftsmen were of that brotherhood; and these gladly gave the cunning of their hands no less than the inclinations of their hearts, for the greater honouring of God.

And this abbey-church had in the west of it a great portal that opened upon the city street, whereby the townsfolk might enter into the nave for the hearing of the Mass. And this door, that was for them an ensign of the heavenly treasure which their souls should find within, was richly arched and canopied right nobly with mason's work of fretted stone; but its niches were empty and the histories that

Our Lady of the Lintel

should complete it were not made, because none there were in the brotherhood that were fit to undertake it, for this was a great work. And whilst it stood thus, it chanced that there came into the Order a certain man that had been a painter in the world and very excellent in his craft; and now he wished, for a vow he had made, to take on the habit of religion. Therefore it seemed most right to the convent that this new brother of theirs, that had such skill in the painting of things, should be given in charge the beautifying and completing of that door which bade all them that were of the city to the mysteries of Holy Church.

"For," said they, "this art of his, that is so far beyond the common, shall there cause all men as they pass to think on God and Our Lady; and thereby religion shall be honoured, and our house also."

So was it done, and ladders were made, and beams laid on them that he might work without hindrance on every part of the door; and loving both God and his craft very greatly, he entered upon the work with joy.

Now this was a man most expert in his art, that could handle both chisel and brush; having also that eye of faith which sees as in a mirror the very lineaments of things divine. And so great pains did he bestow upon this porch, that was the first fruits of his religious life, and with such gracious sights were his prayers rewarded, that presently it was all filled with fair figures,

to wit the Blessed Saints that stand to guide us to the gate of Heaven. *Our Lady of the Lintel*

But without, above the lintel was a great space wherein no figures were nor tracery work. Here then were his ladders now set up, that he might make there a Majesty, that is to say an image of Our Lady Queen of Heaven reigning gloriously, and holding her Child Jesu in her arms: and this he did to show that she is truly *Porta Coeli*, that is, the Door by which our salvation doth come. And the said monk took great pleasure in making the image of the Most Blest, for he had her always in his heart. He made her as fair as he could, and her shoulders he clothed with the Mantle of Mercy, and on her head he laid the angels' crown. And he enthroned her in the centre of the portal, where all must see her as they passed; for was not the church dedicate in her name? Never had more lovely Lady held her court in that town.

Then, when this he had done, that painter mounted higher, even to the gable of the roof. There above all did he portray Our Saviour Jesu Christ, as He sits in judgment for the judging of all manner of men; stern of aspect he made Him, as in the *Dies Irae* He shall be, and a rainbow was under His feet. And he made at the right hand of this High Judge a Paradise exceeding fair, wherein one might see God encompassed by the angels, of whom this part was full. And after this, as tradition enjoins, the said brother made a Hell upon the other side; and he began to paint therein an

Our Lady of the Lintel

image of the Devil with his horns and cloven feet, so hideous and so terrible to see that I think fiend was never fashioned of so great an hideousness before, no, neither in painting nor in stone; for none could look on it without fear. And so ugly was this history of his, that Sathan himself, who is in Hell, was angry thereat; for he is proud of heart and loves not to be brought into derision. Therefore he hid himself in the likeness of a man, and came from Hell, and appeared before this monk, that worked yet upon his likeness, making with great skill the red eyes of it, and the tusks that came out from the lips.

Then said the Devil to him, as a gossip might do that loved to watch others at their work,

"Hahay! brother, what do you here, that you so horribly disfigure this wall? I know not of what you can be thinking, to paint upon a church so foul a form, nor what your Abbot shall say when he sees this handiwork of yours. Naught have I seen so hideous as this history that you have drawn, nor can I think that any man will endure to look upon it twice."

Then the monk laughed right joyfully, for he knew that his work was well done; and he answered:

"Fair and sweet brother, if God will aid me there shall be in all the world no better nor more hideous history of Hell than that which here I paint. It is plain that you are not accustomed to look upon the Devil; but, had you ever seen him, so ugly is he that you would take

little account of this picture. And know well that if I can make it yet more vile than now it seemeth, that will I surely do; for he is indeed more monstrous than aught we can fashion of our utmost wit." *Our Lady of the Lintel*

When Sathan heard these things he could no longer contain himself, for he was exceeding wrath; and,

"Have a care," saith he, "for I am he whom you defame, and I will in no wise suffer your villainy. What boots it to you thus to malign the Devil? A pretty trade indeed, to bring scorn upon the Prince of Hell! If thus you do, you will make me to lose all the servants I have in this city, the which have served me truly all their lives; for when they see so hideous an image of their sovereign, they will cease to love me, and instead they will love that woman whom I see that you have made below, for that she hath great beauty. A sorry matter, that a wench should take from Lucifer his due! Amend, therefore, this work of yours, for it is but foolishly done. I did you never an ill, yet have you done me all the most grievous hurt you could. Is this the precept of religion? Efface this history whilst you may, lest I do you some evil, and make me in the likeness of a young knight that is valiant and fair. And I warn you straitly that if you do not, you will repent it. I go my ways; forget me not, for he that so doeth, doeth but foolishly."

Then Sathan vanished and went back into Hell; and the monk, that was the painter,

Our Lady of the Lintel

found himself alone. And he was much afraid, for he knew that he had spoken with the Prince of Darkness that was strong to hurt him: yet it seemed to him that some help he might have, if he but asked Our Lady for it. Therefore on the next day, when that the Mass of the Blessed Virgin had been sung, he kneeled down before her altar that was in the church right humbly, and cried to her with clasped hands, saying:

"Alas! dear Lady, what shall I do? The Devil has threatened me, and therefore do I stand in great danger; for I know that he is the master of all cunning and deceit, and can compass my undoing if he will. Certainly should I be his very good friend if I changed to fairness his likeness that is foul, and gilded it all about as he ordains. Then he might find many lovers in this city that now desire him not, and for this he would cherish me and hurt me not at all. Alas! poor wretch that I am! What have I said? Shall I serve the Devil? Shall I not serve God and His Mother? Verily, we are told that they are secure that love God and serve Him with good will; and I know that none can serve two masters, for if he please one he displeases the other. And I am assured that they do but foolishly that leave God to do the bidding of the Enemy in Hell. Rather is it my devoir to make hideous the image of that Enemy, that the more I may put him to shame and despite, for he tramples on God's service wherever and whenever he can. For this I hate him, as every religious should; therefore I will

take heart, and do him all the shame and grief I may, if God and Our Lady give me strength." *Our Lady of the Lintel*

So it was that on the next morning this brother mounted again upon the ladders; and being full of good courage he set himself to his labours, to wit, that he might paint the most ugly and terrible Devil that ever limner devised. Monstrous and crooked he made him, with horns that grew from his forehead and hairy limbs like unto the beasts. And when Sathan, that was once a fair angel, saw himself thus made more hideous than tofore, and matter of mockery to all that passed, he was filled with rage, and he came and appeared to that painter in his proper shape, more vile and monstrous than our wit can fashion it, for it is the very shape of sin. And the said monk, seeing him thus, was so greatly affrighted that more he could not have borne, for indeed he was near to swooning with the terror of it.

"Monk," saith the Enemy, "I see that you keep not the rule of obedience as a religious should. Did I not charge you yesterday that you should cease this dishonouring of my person, and make me beautiful and gracious even as I am in the eyes of my servants, and as that woman whom you have painted here below?"

Now when Saint Mary heard the Fiend, that used her image with discourtesy, it vexed her much; and she put courage into the heart of this craftsman of hers that he might stand firm in her defence. And being renewed with great

Our Lady of the Lintel

love of that Lady, he replied to the Devil right boldly, saying:

"How shall I do this? You speak but ignorantly, for it is the property of art to show all things according to their kind. Know that she whom you see there is the Queen of Heaven, you are but the Devil: therefore it is not meet that any offer you the worship that is her due. Had I fine gold here upon my palette, with that I would surround her as with an aureole, for she is holy; but your image I would encompass with foulness all I might."

Then said the Devil, exceeding wrathful: "I see well that you think yourself no man, but rather some angel, that you wage war upon me thus. Know then that you stand within my power and kingdom, for I am the Prince of the Air, and here have dominion to raise up and cast down as I will. Let us try together what helper you have to hold you secure in my realms withal, for you shall stay here no longer to defame me."

Then did Sathan hurl himself against those high ladders and the beams that were upon them, whereon that painter stood, that were so far above the earth and close beneath the gable of the church; and he broke the ladders into many pieces, so that they fell down, and he with them, like a thunderbolt might do, even as once he fell from before the Throne of God. And the citizens that stood below to watch the painting were in great fear, looking for the death of that brother, for that all he stood on was destroyed.

And indeed he fell also; and he was in great anguish and torment, for now he thought that he was lost, and that the Devil would bear his soul to Hell. *Our Lady of the Lintel*

But as he fell, he cried with a loud voice, saying: "Help me Saint Mary! Help me, or I die!" And after this he could speak no more, because of the quickness of his flight.

Nevertheless, Our Lady helped him; for as that he fell past that place where he had made her image, that was above the lintel of the door, she stretched out her right arm and took him, and drew him to herself and held him fast. And so well and safely did she hold him, that he received no hurt thereby, but rather a very great beatitude; and her Child, that is Our Lord Jesu Christ, held him upon the other side. So lay he secure between God's Mother and her Son, as those that call on them in peril yet may do.

Now when this miracle was seen of those that stood beneath, they cried out in their amazement; and all the people ran to look at the marvel of the image that held the painter in safety, so that he was neither afraid nor suffered any hurt. For indeed he was far above the ground where none might reach him, neither had he any rest for his feet; yet he feared not. And all the religious of the abbey came, and the Lord Abbot with them, singing devout antiphons and psalms of victory: and when they had so done, and saluted full courteously that Queen of Mercy who had helped her

Our Lady of the Lintel

craftsman in his distress, they raised a ladder that they might bring down that monk from where he lay. But little haste had he to descend, because of the great ease he was in. "For never," he said, "have I known so great comfort as this, that I was held closely in Our Lady's arms; nor would I leave it, but that I may serve her the better thereby."

So, coming to the earth, he entered into the abbey, and went straitway to kneel before the altar of the Blessed Virgin, that had saved her servant's soul alive when Sathan would have destroyed it. And he gave thanks to that Lady weeping; and he served her with his art all the days of his life, making many histories in her honour, the which were richly coloured with crimson and azure and set about with much fine gold. And in all things he worked right diligently for the glory of God and His Mother, and the putting of their enemies to despite. Thus will all prudent painters ever do; for good is it to serve such a Lord and such a Lady, that keep the body from pain and torment and bring the soul to a perdurable joy.

SAINT MARY'S SCHOLAR

HOW HE DID SERVE HIS GLORIOUS MISTRESS; AND OF THE REWARD THAT SHE GAVE HIM

Saint Mary's Scholar

GREAT is the mercy of Almighty God, for many miracles and favours doth He do for His saints and servants upon earth. Yea! and day and night He does great things for His poor little ones, at the intercession of that Maiden who did bear Him in chastity and nursed Him and rocked Him to sleep.

Here we tell the history of a certain poor scholar, the which was a very loving servant of Madame Saint Mary. He dwelt in a city of Germany, that was a seat of learning, and went most diligently to school, there to be taught the Holy Scriptures and the liberal arts of rhetoric and grammar. And the heart of this young man had ever been inclined towards Our Lady with exceeding great love; so that for her sake he had made a vow of his virginity, and shunned all worldly gauds and vain conceits. Every day before he went to his school he saluted her with great reverence and courtesy, kneeling before a fair image of God's Mother that there was in the church, and reciting seven

Saint Mary's Scholar

times the *Ave Maria*; nor would he forego this devotion for any necessity. And this poor scholar was accustomed to ask alms every day in the streets that he might have meat and drink, for he was far from home and his poverty was great. Often his body went hungry that his mind might have food; in that he was greatly set upon the attaining of scholarship. So did he live till his fifteenth year, in poverty and chastity, as Our Lady's servants should; nor was he led astray by the evil conversation of his fellows, for he had a pure and upright heart.

Now it befell at this time that a great feast was held in a village of that neighbourhood, and all who went thereto to make their orisons might gain an indulgence for their sins; and a fair was held there because of the feast, and there was much buying, selling, and revelry. Therefore came folk from all the country side to gain this indulgence, and the poor scholars of the city also, hoping that amongst so great company many might have pity on them and give them an alms. Thither would Saint Mary's scholar go to gain the indulgence; but because he had no money to pay for a bed at the inn, he would not go beforehand on the day of the vigil, as did the other pilgrims, but rising betimes before the dawn on the morning of the feast, he set out alone upon the road.

And because it was so early, and he was in haste to be gone, he forgot to say the seven *Aves* that he had vowed to offer to the Blessed

Virgin every day; but when the sun rose, and the time was come when he was accustomed to pray to her, he remembered his duty that he had left undone. And he was heartily sorry for it, and grieved greatly. Indeed, he would have turned back to the city, and gone to her chapel, there to laud her according to his wont; but so doing he would have missed the indulgence he sought, the which was given only to them that heard Mass on the day of the feast, and this he could not bear to do. Wherefore he kneeled down in the road where he was, and prayed to Our Lady, and said: *Saint Mary's Scholar*

"Most dear and glorious Virgin, sweet Saint Mary! Have compassion, I entreat you, on the feebleness of your poor scholar, that has forgotten his duty this day. Dear Lady, be not angry with me, for I acknowledge my sin and do most heartily bewail it. Here can I make you no amend, but I do promise that so soon as I come to the church whereto I journey, I will go to your chapel that is therein, and salute your image and do penance for my fault. And if that your chapel be shut, I will wait there till it be opened, even until the hour of Vespers if need be; nor will I break my fast till I have made my peace with you."

Then when he had so prayed, he kissed the earth and went his way, weeping right bitterly because of his contrition and having all his thoughts set on the gaining of Our Lady's forgiveness. And so enrapt in meditation he came to an exceeding great wood, a very solitary

Saint Mary's Scholar

place, and his road lay through it; and when he had entered therein, he came presently on a place where woodcutters had been, and the trees they had felled lay still upon the ground. There did he see, upon one of the said trees, an image of the glorious Virgin Mary, fairer than anything that craftsmen of this land have skill to carve or paint. He thought that some sculptor had left it by error in the wood, for it was most excellently gilt and coloured, and in all respects like to those images that stand within the church to bring the blessed saints into our minds. Great joy had the poor scholar when he saw it, for now he might take his devotions to Our Lady without delay. Therefore, falling on his knees before this image, he begged Saint Mary's favour, and made his prayer to her in full, saying seven times the *Ave Maria*. And when he had done this, being filled with a great and pure love, he thought what he might do as earnest of his thankfulness, for that by this image she had helped him to redeem his fault. And it seemed to him that something indeed he might do for it; for there were none in this forest to cherish it, and ill was it prepared to endure the foul weather or the dangers of the place, having no shelter from wind and rain, nor aught defence against the creatures of the woods.

Then straightway he let pick leaves from the trees, and made from them a little hat, the which he placed upon her sacred head that the birds might not perch upon it nor rain wet it;

and when he had so done he saluted her very courteously and went his way. But when that he had gone a little while, great fervour of love came anew to his heart for that fair image, and he was grieved because the rich colours of it—for indeed it was right skilfully painted with azure and gold—should have naught to keep them from the weather. Therefore he turned back, and since he had nothing else but a shirt and breeches of linen stuff, and a cloak wherewith he covered them, he took his shirt and tore it into two parts, and folded it about the image of his Lady as best he could, that it might keep her somewhat from rain and cold. Then he wrapped himself in his cloak to cover his nakedness, and set forth upon his journey again, for no more could he do.

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But behold! no sooner was he gone from her than he heard the image that called him to her again; and at this he was much amazed, for he had thought it nothing different from those carved images of wood, the which are common in that country and stand in every church. But he knew that none else could have spoken to him, for he was alone in the forest and very far from any house, and on each side of him was the brake where no man might be. Therefore he came back quickly, and with exceeding awe and reverence did offer himself wholly to the Queen of Angels, for he believed that he had heard her voice.

Then, whilst he knelt there, the Blessed Virgin spoke to him and said: "My little son, I thank

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you for these gifts you have made me; for indeed I had great need of them for in that you have clothed this my image and have sheltered its limbs from cold and its head from rain, these things have you done unto me. Now shall you proceed on your journey to that shrine whither you are bound, and when you are come there you shall go to the bishop and speak with him in my name. And you will find him in the parson's house, there where he sits at meat with his friends. Then shall you say to him: 'My Mistress, that is the Virgin Mary, greets you, and she would have you to know that I am her scholar, and she would have me serve her at her altar forthwith. Therefore it is her will that you do ordain me priest to-morrow, for she is greatly impatient to have me sing her Mass.'"

When the poor scholar heard this, he thought it some jest, or rather a device of the Evil One to put foolishness into his heart. He knew that he was too young to be priested, for he had but fifteen years, and but little learning had he got in divine scholarship; and also the season of the orderings, when clerks are hallowed, was not come.

But the Queen of Heaven, who can read the heart though the tongue be silent, saw that he doubted her words. Therefore she spoke to him again and reassured him, saying: "My little one, be of good cheer; for all that I have promised shall befall. And when you are come to the bishop, if he believe you not, you shall give him a sign, saying: 'My lord, I am come

from that Lady to whom you did devote yourself on the day when this see was given to you. For then you did secretly vow and promise that you would be wholly her servant, and each day would salute her, saying fifty times *Ave Maria;* the which you have long time ceased to do. Therefore she ordains, that if you would again have her favour, you make me priest; for she would have me serve her at her altar all the days of my life.'" *Saint Mary's Scholar*

When the poor scholar heard the Lady Mary thus speak, he fell down upon his face before her, and prayed most heartily that of her pity she would make him worthy of her grace. And when his prayer was done he rose up, and raised his eyes toward that image whence his happiness had come; but no image was there, for it had vanished clean away, and he was alone in the forest.

Then, when he saw this, he knew that Our Lady had shown him a fair miracle, and he began to laud her with a loud voice, for he was full of thankfulness. And so praising her, he continued on his road, and came to the village where the feast was held, and to the church. There he went in and heard Mass, that he might have the indulgence for his soul; nor did he forget the glorious Virgin, for he went to her chapel that was in the church and there made orison. Then did he go to the parson's house, as she had bid him; but in that he was now half naked, having but his cloak and breeches, the porter would not let him come

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in, turning him from the door with blows and harsh words, as he did all poor folk. Nevertheless, Saint Mary's scholar was nothing disheartened; but because of the strength that his Mistress's words had given him, he would not be thrust out, but won past the door and came into the great hall where the bishop sat at meat with his friends, priests, knights, and gentlemen of the pilgrimage. And he drew near the high board where the bishop was, and there stood, and cried with a loud voice that he had a message of great import to deliver.

The bishop, seeing this young man that was clad only in cloak and linen breeches, yet spoke with so great assurance, supposed he was some wandering jester that had come to the fair; and he and all his company held their peace, that they might the better hear his fooling. Then, when all were silent, Saint Mary's scholar spoke as Our Lady had commanded him, saying:

"My Mistress, that is the Virgin Mary, greets you; and would have you to know that I am her scholar, and that she would have me serve her as her priest."

But when he had thus spoken, the bishop would hear him no longer, crying: "Fool, jest how you will of such things as be lawful, but the name of God's Mother you shall not bring into contempt, for this is malice and great blasphemy."

Then said the scholar: "This shall I never do, for I love Our Lady's honour above all else. But the devoir she has laid on me I must surely

perform, and therefore I demand that to-morrow you ordain me priest, for this is her will." *Saint Mary's Scholar*

Then the bishop mocked him and said: "Nay, you are too finely clad for the poor service of religion; but very surely if you cease not this blasphemy I will send you to the whipping-post, that your body may be better adorned with many stripes. To jest is good, but ill does it fare with them that lightly speak of holy things."

Said the poor scholar: "My lord, will you send to the whipping-post the messenger of that Lady to whom you did on the day of your consecration vow fifty *Aves* a day? These you have not given her, for the which cause she is angry; and now she demands a better chaplain, that shall serve her without neglect."

When the bishop heard these words he was so greatly astonished that he rose from before the table and dismissed the company without delay; and when they were gone, he bade Saint Mary's scholar to approach him and sit by his side and tell him all the matter. Then, when he had heard it, he fell down on his face before that glorious Virgin, who had thus rebuked him out of the mouth of this poor child of hers; and he promised that he would do in all things that which her messenger commanded, praying very humbly that she would pardon his neglect.

Then, when morning was come, he went with the poor scholar to the church, and there did hallow him: and when this was done he led him

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to Our Lady's altar and bade him to be her chaplain and to sing her Mass forthwith. But at this the young man was greatly afraid, for he was wholly ignorant of the manner in which this high service should be sung: therefore did he entreat that he might be excused from it till he had learned somewhat of the matter, but that instead he might read Mass, the which he could well do.

"Nay," said the bishop, "this Mass you shall sing, for it is a Mass of thanksgiving. Have no fear, for she who has sent you hither and called you to her service will be with you to aid you in your task."

Then said the young priest: "Domine, labia mea aperies!" And being vested he went to the altar, and there did recite the *confiteor* and the secret prayers. And when he had so done his heart was filled with a great fervour of love divine, and his tongue being moved by the spirit of wisdom and understanding, he began to sing the Introit of Our Lady, namely, that which begins "Salve sancta Parens," in fair and goodly sort, as one of long custom in that service. And lo! when he had sung the words, "Enixa puerpera Regem," the whole congregation took this song from his lips and cried, saying, "Qui coelum terramque regit in saecula saeculorum."

Therefore, being greatly encouraged by this marvel, Saint Mary's scholar did well and bravely sing her Mass: so that one might have thought him a priest of great age and learning, for love had made him wise. And

behold! when he came to the Offertory, the bishop, who sat in his throne that was in the choir, saw great wonder; to wit, his holy Mistress, that is Our Lady Queen of Angels, who came into the church with all her train. And she was most excellently apparelled in velvet and silk, and the clasp of her mantle shone like the stars, and her crown glittered so that no eye could bear it. And when her chaplain sang the Offertory words, namely, "Beata es Virgo Maria, quae omnium portasti Creatorem," this glorious Lady came very humbly to the altar, and there she offered, with exceeding great devotion, the little hat of leaves that he had woven for her in the forest. And it was as fresh and green as in the hour when it was made. *Saint Mary's Scholar*

Then she withdrew a little space with her maidens, and the young priest, that had seen her offering, was uplifted with right holy joy, for now he knew his service was accepted. And the bishop also saw the miracle, by the which he was the more persuaded of the truth of all that he had heard; but the people that were in the church saw it not. And when the Oblation was made, and the priest began the prayer, "Suscipe sancta Trinitas," again the Queen of Angels drew near him, and with her fair and holy hands she offered upon the altar the linen shirt wherewith her scholar had wrapped her from the cold: and when she had so done she returned to Heaven with all her company.

Then did her chaplain sing her Office to the end exceeding sweetly, for his heart was full of

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joy; and when that her Son was present upon the altar, and he had partaken of that Blessed Bread, he turned and raised his hands to bless the people. But no words came from him; rather stood he as an image might do that raises its hands toward God. Then his clerk, perceiving that he spake not, ran to him, fearing some ill; and the bishop came also, full of dread, for he knew that there was great and marvellous work in the sacring of this Mass. And verily, a fresh marvel there was; for the soul of Saint Mary's scholar was gone from him, even whilst he sang his Mistress's Mass. Yea, that Mistress whom he had clothed and cherished, the which forgets not the lovingkindness of her friends, had taken him altogether to her keeping: that he might never leave her, but serve her in blessedness eternal before the very Altar of the Lamb!

THE CELESTIAL MEDICINE

HERE TELL WE THE HISTORY OF A CERTAIN BROTHER THAT WAS CONVERTED FROM THE PRACTICE OF PHARMACY TO THAT OF RELIGION BY OUR LADY'S GRACE

The Celestial Medicine

IT is told in the chronicle of the Order of the Cistercians how that there lived on a time in the Abbey of Clairvaux a certain brother, that was exceeding delicate of body, being full of infirmities that tormented him much. And he, pondering greatly on his maladies and how best to heal them, had become an herbalist of much skill, a wise physician, learned in all diseases of the flesh, and in the preparation of those simples wherewith we poor children seek to cosset and repair our mortal fraime. Indeed, this was a man of great scholarship, virtuous also, and of right sober conversation; but because he laboured under much infirmity, being ofttimes tormented with a grievous sickness that kept him many days within his cell, he was tempted to think too greatly on the needs of the body, as what he should eat and what drink, and what cordial were best against the cold. And believing that he might not bear the hardships of religion and the coarse food that holy

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poverty enjoins, he refused the common meat of the refectory, that he might have some choice morsel for his stomach's sake, and searched out vain and curious medicines for the solace of his poor body when he had done better to consider the health of his soul. For when his brethren were engaged in holy meditation, this monk was ever mixing potions or seeking rare simples in the fields; and every new pain that he had, he would devise some new essence to heal it. And so greatly did he labour in the practice of pharmacy, that the Abbot and his brethren held him a very learned physician, and they came oft to him for medicine and for counsel when any pain they had, the which pleased him well.

But our most gentle and merciful Lady, that is the Mother of all them that are dedicate to God, was grieved for this religious that was so careful of his bodily well-being and so negligent in the purging of his spiritual distempers, on the which indeed he pondered not at all. And because of her compassion she desireth to bring all her erring children back to the true path whence they have strayed, she had it in her mind to correct him, that he might learn and understand how that our true health hangs not on our own cares, but altogether on the loving-kindness of Almighty God; and how that He cherishes exceeding sweetly all that give themselves entirely to His keeping, and like as a Father doth pity the simple and sinful, keeping them in health and sickness, and mending their grief. For little do the ills of the body trouble

them that have the promise of eternal life, and small need have we of earthly medicines when we have partaken of the healing potion of His grace. But these things that poor brother knew not, for all his thoughts were set on the gathering of roots and pungent herbs, and the making of unguents and electuaries to comfort his weak body if he could.

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And one night, when he had laboured many hours at the distilling of an essence that should be sovereign against disorders of the spleen, the Blessed Virgin caused this monk to fall into a deep sleep there in the midst of the pharmacy where he tended his still. And as he slept thus, it appeared to him that he was brought from this place and set in the choir of the abbey-church, and he saw all his brethren seated in their stalls, and the Lord Abbot also, and they were singing the Hour of Lauds. But when he looked upon the faces of his brothers he had great amazement; for it seemed to him that they were full sick and weary, and in great need of refreshment. And he said within himself:

"What has chanced? My brethren, that were so hale and hearty, and easily endured all the hardships of the rule, are become miserable and infirm, even as I."

But little time had he to observe them, for behold, there came to the door of the church the sublime and humble Mother of Mercy, even Saint Mary the Virgin, and the light of her presence fell on all that were within

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it. And she carried in her hands a little pyx that was full of the most precious electuary, and all the church was filled with the perfume of it, that was as the scent of apple-blossom in the spring. And as he watched, that sweet Lady came into the choir of the church and passed by the stalls of the brethren one by one: and she stayed before each of the monks that there did make orison, and as they did open their mouths for the singing of the psalm she placed therein, with her pure and venerable hands, a little of the electuary that she carried in the pyx. And each, when he received it, tasted it with joy and thanksgiving, being refreshed with sweet wonder and with health divine, so that his weariness vanished and he felt no more the burden of his mortal frame; for this is that heavenly medicine that shall be for the healing of the servants of God.

Then that brother the herbalist, seeing this thing, was filled with an exceeding joyous expectation; for he said within himself that doubtless he also should receive this celestial medicine, by which his many pains should be relieved and his body made altogether whole. And further he was greatly curious to know the simples wherewith it was made, whether they were such as grow in earthly gardens, and what cunning had been used in the compounding thereof.

But lo! when that holy Virgin came to the place where he stood, she offered him not the electuary wherewith he had seen his brethren

fed, but would have passed him by. And he, being greatly disappointed, and full of dread lest he should miss his portion, caught her robe as she passed him, and cried, saying: *The Celestial Medicine*

"Dear Lady, sweet Saint Mary, will you not give me some of this precious medicine? My brothers, that are hale of body, have received it; but I, dear Virgin, need it more than they can do, for I am a right sickly man, full of distempers, that can scarce bear the infirmities wherewith I am distressed."

But the Blessed Virgin looked on him exceedingly sternly and repulsed him, saying: "Medice, cura teipsum! What need have you of our medicines? For you are a very wise physician, that thinks of no other thing than the compounding of simples for the healing of your pains. It were a sorry matter if you, that ponder incessantly what meat you may have, and what herbs are best to remedy your fever or your flux, could not care for your health alone. But these your brothers, that think first on God and His worship, are in other case, for they have thrown all their cares upon my Lord and Son; and they that so do are become my children, and I cherish them and give them all things whereof they stand in need, as well for the healing of the body as for the refreshment of the soul."

When he heard these words, that monk was filled with exceeding contrition and amazement, and he abased himself right humbly before the Queen of Angels, and promised that henceforth

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he would devote himself altogether to God: thinking no more of himself, what he should eat and drink, or what herbs should take against his maladies, but casting all his care upon that Father and giving himself entirely into His hand.

And when she heard this promise, the heart of that glorious Lady, who is truly the refuge and protector of all Christians but the special helper of her servants that have chosen the religious life, was moved towards him; and she accepted his penitence with courtesy, and blessed him, and gave him from out her little pyx a portion of the electuary that he desired. And when this infirm and sickly brother tasted that heavenly medicine, straitway great comfort and healing entered into him; so that forgetting all the ills of his poor body, he began to praise God with a loud voice, for his heart was so greatly uplifted with love and thanksgiving that he could think of no other thing.

And as he was in the midst of these lauds that he said, he awoke out of his vision; and he found that he was no longer in the choir of the church, but in the pharmacy wherein he had that evening undertaken to make an essence that should be sovereign against disorders of the spleen. And the still was there, and the vessels, wherein the said essence should be prepared; but now he looked on them with disgust, as good monks should on fond deceits, for he had tasted of that celestial medicine which puts away from them that do partake of it all care for the prosperity of the flesh. And lo!

he, that in spite of all his care and learning had ever been infirm and subject to maladies most grievous, was now altogether renewed with health and strength; and abjuring all herbs and drugs, forthwith he cast out from his cell his jars and phials, and the potions and powders that he had therein, and seeking no more to feed upon delicates for his stomach's sake, he willingly accepted the coarse and common food wherewith his brethren were fed. And joining with them in the service of God and in well-doing, he was endowed with health and strength both of body and soul; and he prospered exceedingly in wisdom and in love divine, and had great peace. *The Celestial Medicine*

Now there be many monks, my brethren, that, though they have chosen the religious life, yet seem more to be pupils in the school of Æsculapius than in that of Jesu Christ. These, forgetting how that it is the duty of every religious man to love God above all else, to minister to His glory, and to perfect themselves in spiritual things, would ever be seeking the health of their mortal flesh, caring little what canker there may be in the immortal soul so long as the body gives not pain. All the summer do these foolish brethren wander in the fields, leaving their convent where their rule doth bid them be, that they may seek out vile and nauseous herbs and roots to heal the maladies that they think they have. And when winter comes, no other care do they have but in the drying preparation and commixture of

The Celestial Medicine

these simples, that they may partake thereof and also give of them to their brethren, the which, having their minds set on heavenly mysteries, desire them not at all; for they know that God will have care of their bodies no less than of their souls. Thus these fond physicians, knowing not that true and effective medicine wherewith Our Lady heals her faithful children, do search out and invent strange and dangerous potions, trusting their own wit, the which can help them not at all. Let all such brothers therefore read and mark the ensample herein writ, that they may be taught thereby to put more confidence in God than in Galen, to hope more in the Queen of the Heavens, than in the herbs of the field.

THE DOVE THAT RETURNED

HOW A CERTAIN CLERK DEVOTED TO THE VIRGIN MARY INVOKED THE DEVIL BY NECROMANCY, THAT HE MIGHT GAIN A BRIDE THEREBY

The Dove that Returned

THE Devil, that is our Enemy, doth ever wage great war upon them that love and serve Our Lady Mary, seeking what he may do to tempt them from her service, for he knoweth that all her children are his foes; and especially will he lead them if he can to choose another and an earthly mistress, that shall turn from love celestial to the enjoyment of this world's love, for by this he gains great power over their souls.

There was a certain young clerk that served in the cathedral-church of his town; and he was a pious and a gentle youth, having his heart filled with a pure and fervent love for God and Our Lady, so that he served them gladly and as well as he could. His bishop cherished him as a father might do, for he judged him to be a child of God; and he taught him much scholarship, and would keep him ever at his side. And the young man, because of the great love he had for things

The Dove that Returned

divine, hated the world, and longed only for the time when he might be hallowed priest. Furthermore, he was diligent at his prayers, saying each day with exceeding fervour the Hours of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Now this was a matter greatly vexing to Sathan, who is the foe of all that Lady's friends: and seeing how that this young clerk increased in virtue and religion, he was jealous to turn him from it and steal his soul from God. Therefore he entered into his heart, one day as he was at Vespers in the choir, and caused him to look upon a certain maiden of the congregation that was very fair of face: and the young man, when he saw her, was suddenly filled with a great passion of love, so that forgetting all else he most ardently desired her for his wife. Then did he do great battle with himself, for he knew that his life was promised to God and to the Church, and that all worldly love for him was but a sin; moreover, he was very poor, and dared not ask this lady of her parents, the which were wealthy folk and pious, and were minded to give their daughter to a nunnery that there she might pray for them all her days.

But he could not overcome his desire, for the Enemy was always at his side to tempt him with thoughts of it, so that he had no more peace nor any joy in the service of God; and at last a day came when he might bear it no more, being indeed ready to die of grief and anguish because he might neither have the

maiden whom he loved nor find anything to heal his pain. Then, because he knew not what else to do, Sathan put it into this young man's heart that he should have recourse to a certain sorcerer, that lived in that city, an heathen man that was a friend of the detested Evil One, that he might have of him a love-philtre or other villainy. To him did he go; and when he was come into his house, he saith to him: *The Dove that Returned*

"Messire, it is said that you are greatly learned in the magic arts. If this be true, conjure for me, I pray you, the devil by whom you do your works, that he may help me gain my mistress' love. If this you will do, it shall profit you well; for I will give you all the gold that I possess."

Said the sorcerer: "My friend, I am not able to do this of myself, for the devil that serves me has not power for it. If this you indeed desire, you must put yourself in the hands of his master and mine, the Prince of Hell; and if you please him and do his will, very surely he will give you that which you crave."

Saith the clerk: "What would he have me to do?"

Answered the sorcerer: "It is needful that you do abjure in writing the service of Jesu Christ your God."

That poor youth replied: "I will do it, if thereby I may have my sweetheart's love."

Then said the wizard: "If indeed you are

The Dove that Returned

ready to do this, I will help you all I may, and first I will dictate the letter that you must carry to the Prince of Hell."

Then did he dictate to him a letter in this manner: "Most puissant Prince and Lord of Evil! Whereas it is our bounden duty to give to the God that did make and redeem us our love and all our works, nevertheless, I do altogether deny Him and also the Christian religion, and seek of my own will to be made of your company. And I do humbly entreat, that you will accept this my service, and in recompense thereof will smite the maiden whom I desire with the pangs of love, that I may have her to be my friend. If this you will do, then am I your man for evermore to serve and to obey you."

Then when this letter was writ and engrossed, the sorcerer warned the young man, saying: "You must go at a certain hour of the night, and stand upon the heathen stone that is beyond the gates, and hold this parchment in the air. Then one will come who shall lead you into the presence of Sathan, that there you may give it into his hands. And have no fear, for thus you will get all your desire."

Then did that unfortunate receive the parchment right eagerly, and he carried it in the night to the place that was ordained him; and there, standing on the stone where heathen men had aforetime sacrificed to Sathan, he most heartily invoked the Prince of Darkness and asked him for his help. And behold, when he

had so done a little while, came an evil spirit, the which, perceiving him to be altogether led astray and ripe for deeds of sin, took him with much joy and brought him to the place where Sathan was, where he sat enthroned above the sun with the company of the wicked all about him. *The Dove that Returned*

And when he had received the letter of the sorcerer, the Prince of the Powers of the Air saith to this young man, "Credis in me?"

Replied the poor clerk, "Credo."

The Devil then saith to him, "This is well; nevertheless, it does not content me, for I have great knowledge of you Christians, how that very often you repudiate your debts and evade your obligation. For you come to me when you would have my help in your iniquities, but when all is done, and you must pay me the price of your sin, you deny me altogether, and flee for help to my enemy Christ: Who, because He is both patient and merciful, doth forgive and receive you, and keeps you from my power. Therefore, before I help you, you must deny the God in Trinity, in Whose Name you were baptized, and also His Virgin Mother Mary, giving yourself wholly into my hands. For I would have you by my side at Judgment Day, that we may taste together the eternal torments that are prepared for me."

Said the clerk, "I cannot deny my sweet Lady, the Blessed Virgin, for she hath shown me much kindliness, and therefore must I use her courteously; but all else will I do as you desire."

The Dove that Returned

Then right solemnly did that unfortunate abjure his Holy Baptism in the name of Father, Son and Holy Ghost; and lo! when he did reny the Holy Spirit, a white dove came from out his mouth and flew away into highest heaven. And the young man saw it with dread and amazement; nevertheless he repented not but persevered to the end. And when he had done, Sathan saith to him:

"I am content; but be not too sure that you shall have your will of your sweetheart, for that Lady whom you will not deny is a strong saint and dangerous, and she will work against it if she can."

Then did the Prince of Evil send a fiend exceeding subtle, the which entered into the heart of that maiden, and laboured greatly to imprint upon her mind the image of the young clerk that desired her. And so much did he tempt her, and so continually, that at last, altogether forgetting the religious life for which she was intended, she became inflamed with ardent love for this young man; the which wrought in her so powerfully that she could not conceal it, but came and threw herself upon the ground before her father, saying:

"Miserere mei, miserere! for I suffer torments of love for a certain young clerk that sings in the cathedral choir. Alas! father, will you not have pity on me and join me to him? Verily, if you do not, in a very little while you will see me dead of love, the which you must justify before God at the Doom.

Dear father, have pity on your flesh and blood that suffers so great pain, and deny me not my heart's desire!" *The Dove that Returned*

Her father said to her with tears, "'Heu mihi peccatori!' What has befallen my unhappy child? Who has robbed me of my treasure? It is known of all that I had devoted you to a celestial marriage, namely, to be a bride of Jesu Christ, that you might be of the household of the angels, and with them rejoice in the perfect love of God. But now you are inflamed with earthly passions, and desire the love of man, the which is a poor and transitory thing. Nevertheless, if husband you must have, I will find you a better one than this young man, for he has neither nobility nor wealth; therefore have patience."

But the maiden persevered in her demand, saying, "Nay, father, no husband will I have but this, and no habit will take but the wedding garment. Neither can I wait, for I suffer great torments; therefore give me what I ask, for if you will not I shall surely die."

Then was the poor father full of sorrow. "For," said he, "if I do this thing I break my contract with God, and my daughter's soul will go down into the pit." And he took counsel with his friends what were best to be done. These said to him that it were better to do the will of the maiden than incite her to seek death, the which were surely a great crime displeasing to God and His Saints. Therefore at last he went to the bishop and told him his

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daughter's grief, and asked of him that he would release his clerk from orders, that they might be wed, for no other remedy could he see. The bishop was greatly vexed at it, for much better had he loved that this clerk whom he had cherished should wed his Heavenly Mistress than take to himself a wife according to the world: and he called the young man to him and questioned him straitly, admonishing him that he should think well on the discourtesy he did to God, Saint Mary, and the Church. But nought that he could say might move him, so that at last he was forced to consent to the marriage lest worse befall; and the young clerk was exceeding glad, remembering not the price that he must pay to the Devil for his joy, nor how that God was no longer with him, because he had denied His Name.

Now when the day of the wedding was come, came the young clerk and his friends, and also the maiden and her parents, to the cathedral-church for the saying of the Nuptial Mass. And whiles the said Mass went forward, it came of a sudden into the mind of the bridegroom how that he had long neglected to say the Hours of the Blessed Virgin, the which in the time of his innocence he had been accustomed to recite each day. Therefore he began them forthwith, and said them to the end of Sext: but even as he began the Hour of None the Mass was ended, and the priest having come to the dismissal, it was convenient that he should go home with his bride and the guests. Never-

theless, he was not content to leave this Hour unsaid, for now he remembered that Our Lady was all the friend he had, because he had abjured Our Lord her Son; for the which reason he stood in great need of her grace. *The Dove that Returned*

Therefore, when the time came that the wedding guests should wash their hands in preparation for the feast, he made his excuses, begging that they would tarry a little, for he stayed not long away; and he returned back into the church full hastily, and there kneeled down before her altar, and began to say the Hour of None with great devotion. But the words of this Office filled him with dread, for they showed him the peril in which he stood, saying, "Nisi Dominus aedificaverit domum, invanum laboraverunt qui aedificant eam." And again, "Beati omnes, qui timent Dominum; qui ambulant in viis ejus."

And pondering on these matters he fell into a deep sleep; and when so he lay, behold! the Virgin Mary appeared to him, in the likeness of a right fair lady: and she asked him if he knew her, whom she was.

Said the bridegroom, "Nay, lady, I know you not."

"I am," said she, "that Mary of whom you have just said the Hour of None. But greatly am I vexed against you, for once you were devoted to my service and that of my Son: but Him have you abjured for Sathan, for the which you will be very surely damned, and me, though you denied me not, you have yet left

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for another woman, to whom you have given all your love."

When the young clerk heard these words, he was filled with a very fervent sorrow for all the evil he had done; and he fell down at the feet of the glorious Virgin, and wept bitterly, and begged her grace. But she said:

"Touch me not: if you would have comfort, go ask it of your new wife whom you have taken in my stead, for I am your sweetheart no more."

"Alas, sweet Lady!" said that poor bridegroom. "Turn not from me altogether, for indeed I am in sorry case: and a heavy darkness is upon me, in that now I know I have lost the love of God. I pray you aid and counsel me before it be too late, for I have not yet completed this marriage, for the which I have emperilled my soul. And I would have you remember, my very dear Mistress and Queen, that I denied you not, even though I abjured Almighty God, for I have ever loved you exceeding well. Yea, so greatly do I love you, that even now if you demand it I am ready to leave my bride forthwith, and have no other wife but you."

Said the most holy Virgin, "If this you will do, I will aid you openly and be your Bride for evermore: but first you must make your peace with God, that you may be saved from the Enemy in Hell, for now His Spirit is no longer with you, and without it no man can have my love. Go therefore to your bishop

and make confession of your sin, and faithfully perform the penance wherewith he shall charge you. I, meanwhile, will go to Paradise, there to intercede for you before my Son, that He may bring you safely out of Sathan's hand."

The Dove that Returned

Then the Queen of Angels vanished away, and at once the young clerk awoke from his slumber; and he rose up, being full of awe, and thinking no longer of his bride nor of the marriage feast. And he went straitway to the bishop, and kneeling down before him very humbly he accused himself of mortal sin, telling him all his fault—how that he had trafficked with the Prince of Evil for his bride, abjuring God that he might have his will, and how the Blessed Virgin had rebuked him. And he entreated the bishop very fervently with tears and supplications, that he would release him from this marriage and save him from the Devil if he could; for now he knew his wickedness and was very sorry for it.

Then was the bishop full of joy, seeing his contrition; and forthwith he absolved him from his marriage and gave back the maiden to her father, that she might serve God in the religious life. But he had great dread because of the vows that the young clerk had made to Sathan, by the which the Holy Ghost had been driven from his soul; and he said to him that an exceeding bitter penance he must bear if he would overcome the power of the Enemy and have God's forgiveness of this deadly

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sin. But the young man, being full of fear and repentance, was minded to do everything that was needful, for Our Lady had put a great contrition into his heart. Therefore the bishop did bring him to a very solitary place, where a cave was wherein an holy hermit had once dwelt, by whose presence that spot had been so greatly sanctified that no foul spirit could come near it.

And being come within this cave, the bishop saith to him, "My son, here must you stay three days and three nights, in honour of the Holy Trinity Whom you denied, fasting continually and beseeching God's grace. And I also will pray for you all I can to Our Lord and Our Lady, that you may have their pity and their love."

Then the bishop went a little way off, and made orison to God, entreating Him most ardently for this poor child that stood in such evil case, that his penitence might be accepted and his soul released from Sathan's power. And when the first day was at an end, he came back to the young man, that kneeled before the door of the cave; and he saith to him:

"My son, have you seen aught?"

Replied the penitent, "Yea, I saw a dove in highest heaven, that stayed above my head."

The bishop saith to him, "Wait patiently, and pray most earnestly to God."

And when the second day was done, again the bishop came and questioned him, saying: "Have you seen aught to-day?"

The Dove that Returned

The young man saith, "I saw the dove, that came and hovered close about my head."

Then the bishop exhorted him, saying: "Watch and pray without ceasing, for God is very near." And he went away, but the third day being done, he came to him again in the evening, and said once more:

"Have you seen aught?"

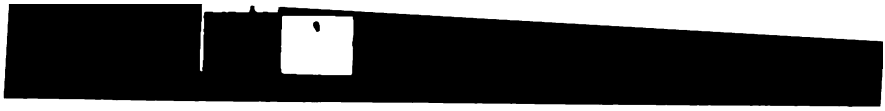
Then the young man fell down upon the earth before him, and cried, saying: "My father, let us give thanks to Almighty God, for I have seen a great mercy this day. For the dove did come, and stayed above my head a long while, and I put out my hand to take it; and behold! when I had so done, straitway it entered into my mouth, and I had great joy, for I know that the Holy Spirit is with me."

Then the bishop gave thanks with exceeding fervour, praising God and Saint Mary, and saying: "Behold, my son, God has accepted your repentance at His Mother's prayers, wherefore you are delivered out of the power of Hell. See to it, therefore, that you serve that Lady and her Son in holiness and chastity forthwith, that the Blessed Spirit you have this day received be ever with you, to help you in your devoir and make you acceptable in their sight."

This did that clerk most willingly do; and forsaking the world he was hallowed priest, and his life was greatly pleasing unto God. And history saith, that when he lay upon his bed to die, the Virgin Mary was seen visibly who came to his passing; and she stood at the head of his

The Dove that Returned

bed. And at the moment when his breath did leave him, that pitiful Lady took from his mouth a white dove, the which she received and cherished very sweetly. And she laid it in her breast; and forthwith departing from that place, she carried it with her to Paradise.



SAINT THOMAS OF CANTERBURY

HEREIN ARE TOLD CERTAIN FAVOURS THAT OUR LADY DID FOR THIS LOVER OF HERS, AND ALSO THE HISTORY OF THE PRIEST THAT KNEW BUT ONE MASS

Saint Thomas of Canterbury

HERE I will tell of a noble work that Christ's Mother did for her dear servant and martyr, Saint Thomas, that was Bishop of Canterbury. In a good time began the friendship that was between them, to wit, whilst he was yet but a young scholar in the University of Paris; for already he did love that Lady with a great devotion, and served her with his lips and with his life.

And it happened at this time that one day he walked with other young men, his fellow students in that city, and they jested together concerning the sweethearts that they had; boasting one against the other, each of the fairness of his friend. Then said Saint Thomas, wishing to prevail over them, for he was but a young man, and somewhat vainglorious:

"She whom I call sweetheart is fairest of all; for there is no woman in all France to compare with her, neither for beauty nor for loving-kindness." And this he said, meaning by his

Saint Thomas of Canterbury

words to honour Our Most Blessed Lady, the Virgin Mary; for she was the only mistress that he had.

But his friends, deeming that he spoke of earthly love, laughed, because they knew that he desired to be priested, and went little amongst women. And they said, "We do not believe that you have any sweetheart. If that you have one, tell us her name, that we may know her since she be so fair."

He answered, "That I may not do; but sweetheart I have exceeding fair and gracious. Little would you heed any other could you but see her."

Then said they, "No doubt this mistress of yours has given you some gage or token, as is the custom amongst lovers?"

"This hath she done for certain," said he. "And it is finer than any you have seen."

But in this he lied, for no testimony had he received that Saint Mary accepted his devotion.

Then one and another showed the love-gage that he had, and said, "Is it fairer than this?" And he answered, "It is more lovely by far." And so at last his fellows were provoked by this boasting, and they said, "If you will not tell us the name of your mistress, show us at least her love-token, that we may know you speak truth."

He said, "That I cannot do."

They answered, "If you cannot, it is because you have it not. And now we believe not that you have any sweetheart, or if you have, it is

but some serving-wench whose kisses you buy of her, and she has given you no token."

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And he was abashed and could not answer.

Then they departed from him, and Saint Thomas went to his home. And now he was full of grief, for it seemed to him that by his idle boasting he had defaced the honour of his glorious Mistress, that should be to him so great a treasure, for that he had made her holy name the subject of light talk and vain dispute. Therefore, going into his oratory, he fell on his knees before her image and cried her mercy very humbly, saying:

"Alas, most blessed Virgin! How great has been my presumption, in that I have dared to call you friend, and set your love against that of earthly women! And by this I have been led to worldly conversation, to vainglory and untruthfulness, a thing that ill becomes your loyal servitors. And little benefit have I got of this fault, for my companions that I undertook to deceive know well that I have lied to them, and for this they will despise me, as they should. Great Queen and dearest Lady, I do most heartily entreat your pardon, the which if you will grant it me, I will serve you henceforth in secret all my life, for most truly I love you; nor will I be ever led to the misusing of your name."

Then he made his devotion with tears and supplications, saying *Salve Regina* and *Ave, Maria!* very devoutly, as her servants should.

Now when God's Mother saw his repentance

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she had pity on her servant, for she knew that he loved her truly and was of an upright life, and it displeased her that he should be brought into contempt for that by reverence he would not name her to his companions that demanded it. Therefore she came, and appeared before him in that oratory, and spoke to him comfortable words of pardon and encouragement.

And she said, "Know, Thomas, that I am most truly your Friend and Sweetheart, that am ever with you to be companion of your loneliness and help in your need; therefore fear not to confess me, for none may have more faithful nor more loving Bride. And I have brought you a love-gage, in token of the troth that is between us; and it is my will that you take and carry it to your companions that they may know that you speak truth."

Then did the Queen of Angels give into the hands of Saint Thomas a little casket, most fairly wrought of goldsmiths' work and set with precious stones. On the sides of it was emblazoned in fair colours the lily-flower of Our Lady, and about it much tabernacle work in the manner of those coffers wherein are kept the relics of the saints.

And she said to him, "Take heed of this gift, for know that all your life and all your honour is therein. Yea! not alone the glories of your earthly pilgrimage, but that perdurable joy which my Son has laid up for those our servants that will be faithful even unto death. 'Pretiosa in conspectu Domini mors Sanctorum ejus.'"

Saint Thomas of Canterbury

Then that most gracious Queen departed, and went back to Paradise, where of her infinite compassion she does intercede for us before her Son. And Saint Thomas, being filled with new courage by reason of the mercy he had had, went and sought out his companions, and he showed to them his love-gage, and told them all that had passed: how that he was dedicate to Our Lady, and how that she had wrought for him this miracle that she might give him token of her love. Then took they the little casket to open it, for they greatly desired to see what was therein, for that she had said that all his life and honour were in it. And when it was open they found a little vestment, most marvellously fashioned of the fairest stuffs: and they were filled with amazement, for these were those robes that bishops wear when they say Our Lady's Mass. By this token they all did know that the glorious Virgin was truly the friend of Saint Thomas, and that she was minded to bring her lover to great honour in the Church, and to the charge and governance of many souls. For this cause they gave him worship, yet he held himself ever very humbly, since he knew that to his Mistress belonged the praise.

Now when that Our Lady's promise was accomplished, and Saint Thomas was Archbishop of Canterbury and Primate of this land, she did to him another courtesy; for she forgets not her lovers ever, as earthly women do, but is ever quick to do them kindliness.

Saint Thomas of Canterbury

At this time that holy bishop was driven by God's enemies into exile; and he fled into France, to Pontigny, and dwelt in the monastery of the Cistercians in that town. And for many years Saint Thomas had worn next to his skin a shirt and breeches made of hair; for the greater mortification of his flesh, and that he might ever keep in mind his Saviour's pains. But none knew it, save only a holy woman, an anchoress of Canterbury, to whom he would take the said garments so that she might mend them.

But when that he was compelled to flee into France for his safety, because of the suddenness of his going he could not provide himself with a change of this vesture; and for that it was very old and greatly worn, that which he had on him was falling to pieces. Therefore, being in Pontigny, where he might not get what he needed without disclosing the matter, which for humility's sake he did not desire to do, Saint Thomas was in great perplexity; for indeed his breeches fell into many holes, and would scarce stay on him. Thus it was, that one day, finding himself alone in the monastery church, and being in the chapel of Our Lady at the head of the choir where few passed save at the hour of her Office, it came into his mind that he would try what he might do for the mending of the said hair breeches. And he took them off his body very discreetly, and examined them where they should be sewed.

But at this craft Saint Thomas had no skill,

being indeed wholly ignorant of the matter, as is the manner of men; and how to begin he knew not, nor yet what contrivance he must use, for he had not the needle and thread that the business required. But far otherwise was it with his Sweetheart, that is the Queen of Ladies. Of such matters the Blessed Virgin is not ignorant; nay, rather is she skilful in the rendering of womanly service, for she is the very Pattern of right womanhood. *Saint Thomas of Canterbury*

Therefore she came, and saluted that bishop her lover with much courtesy, and comforted his fears. "What!" she said, "would you do this alone, that might have your Friend to help you? Let be, for this is woman's work."

And thus said, she took the breeches from his hands and sat down beside him, and repaired all the rents that were in them most properly and well. And when the work was done, she vanished.

Then did Saint Thomas burst into tears, and he fell down on his knees and lauded the glorious Virgin right lovingly, because she had remembered her servant and humbled herself to minister to his needs. And he did on the clothing that she had mended for him, for now it was made new and whole; and so great was the joy he had of it that it seemed softer than the finest silk. But he told this adventure to none, for he feared to boast of the favour that his Lady had shown him.

Now that all may know that this history is true, I will here put in writing another marvel

Saint Thomas of Canterbury

that befell to Saint Thomas, after that he returned to his cathedral-church of Canterbury in England. For because of the prayers that he made to Our Lady his helper, for the healing of that strife which was therein between the King and Holy Church, Philip King of France did contrive the matter, and peace was made. So Saint Thomas might go again to the Kingdom of England, there to minister to his faithful folk.

Now when he had been some while there established, dissension arose within his diocese, because certain men, the which were but Pharisees and hypocrites, accused to his vicar a priest of the place, that was of right happy and holy life, making complaint of him that he never celebrated any other Mass than that of the Most Blessed Virgin Mary. For this was a young man that lived wholly in the love of Our Lady; but though he had a heart full of fervour, he was but slow of wit. And because of the exceeding great devotion that he had for the glorious Virgin, whilst he was still very young he laboured greatly that he might perfect himself in the saying of her Mass. And this he learnt, though indeed he was unlettered and knew nought that a clerk should understand; but those other Masses which Holy Church appoints for the due observing of her feasts, he might not learn, for all scholarship was too hard for him save when it concerned the Mistress whom he loved.

And this young man, being greatly impatient

to serve the Queen of Angels at her altar, did so importune his Ordinary that at last he prevailed with him, and despite his lack of learning was made priest. And every day in the chapel that was at his house he did celebrate the Mass of Christ's Mother, to wit, that which beginneth "Salve, sancta Parens," with much devotion and a right heavenly joy. Which thing was greatly pleasing to our most holy Lady, for she despises not the love of unlettered men.

Saint Thomas of Canterbury

But otherwise was it with the priests that were his neighbours; for they were filled with envy because the greater piety of his life did manifest the worldliness of theirs. Therefore they cited him before Saint Thomas the Archbishop, because, knowing but one Mass, the which he repeated daily, he had dared to take on himself the duties of a priest.

"Thus," they said, "is the Church brought to scorn and God's enemies are exalted! This ignorant man, that can say but one Mass, were better at the plough than at the altar, for indeed it is an insult to God to take Him thus ignorantly into our hands. We know that His service demands great scholarship, to the which this clerk cannot attain, for he lacks understanding. Therefore we pray that he be deprived of his benefice, and that it be given to some other in his stead."

Then Saint Thomas questioned the young priest concerning this matter; and he denied nought, but said that indeed he did celebrate

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daily the Mass of the Blessed Virgin Mary, nor had he used any other Mass since he was hallowed. And the Archbishop marvelled very much, and grieved that he could give him no dispensation, for he knew him for an holy man, though lacking scholarship. Therefore he said to him:

"My son, now must you cease the saying of the Mass, and you must apply yourself to scholarship until you have learned those matters wherein a priest should be well skilled. And when this you have done, I will give you back your benefice, and you shall celebrate Our Lady's Mass again."

When this he heard, that chaplain was greatly cast down; for he knew that these things were too hard for him, and the service of his Mistress was all the joy that he had. And he went home to his chapel, wherein he had a right fair image of the Blessed Virgin that was above the altar, and he stood before that image and cried, saying:

"Alas! most merciful Mother and Lady, what news is this? I have lived wholly for your sake, and for this I have despised marriage and renounced the having of children, that I might the more perfectly serve you. And behold! all my care goes for nought, and I am cast down in confusion and utterly contemned; for because I am ignorant and dull of wit I may no longer celebrate your Mass, the which I had promised to do all the days of my life. For they do say that I have sinned, in that I

have come ignorantly to your altar, there to take your Son into my hands. Sweet Saint Mary, most glorious Virgin! I have no other helper left but you, to make my peace with Jesu Christ your Son. Will you not aid me? for well I know that your intercessions are acceptable to God; and indeed, if I may not serve you, then would I rather die." *Saint Thomas of Canterbury*

This said, he wept bitterly, and threw himself down before the altar, for he was exceeding sore of heart. And behold, the merciful Mother, seeing her chaplain so full of grief, had compassion on him, and she spoke by the mouth of her image, saying:

"My dear one, lift up your heart and be at peace, for I will not suffer you to be taken from my service; and think not that my Son is vexed against you, for all His Mother's servants are His friends. Go therefore to your archbishop, and speak with him secretly, saying: 'My Lord, the Lady your Sweetheart has sent me unto you; the same that did come to you in the monastery church of Pontigny, and with needle and thread did mend your breeches of hair. And she says and demands that because I am her chaplain, and have given myself altogether to her service, I may not be letted in the saying of her Mass. In this you have wronged her, for in all the city of Canterbury there is none other priest that devotes himself wholly to her praise."

When he heard the Queen of Heaven that spake thus to him, that chaplain was greatly

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amazed; and he burst forth into lauds and thanksgivings, for that of her pitiful mercy she had shown this favour unto her poor clerk. Then he arose and went quickly to the palace of the Archbishop; but when he came there he found great press of people, priests, clerks, and gentlemen, that were in the antechamber, and they would not suffer him to come in to the bishop where he held his court.

And they spoke of him one to another, mocking, and saying, "See! there is the ignorant chaplain that knows but one Mass," for the which cause he was confused afresh.

And after that he had waited some hours, there came out from the court the Archdeacon, the which knew this priest and loved him for the goodness and innocency of his life; and he took and brought him into the presence of Saint Thomas. Then, when the Archbishop saw him, he accosted him gently, as his custom was with all; but when that the young priest prayed him that he would amend his judgment, and give him leave to say his Mass again, he reproved him very strictly, saying:

"Better would patience and obedience comport you than these importunities, *carissime*. All things that are necessary I will most willingly grant you: but that which you come to ask I cannot do, for Holy Church forbids."

Then said the chaplain, "My Lord, hear me with patience; for I am sent to you from that Lady who in the monastery church of Pontigny did mend your breeches of hair. And she de-

mands and ordains that you do restore to me the grace of celebrating her Mass, for she knows that I love her; nor has she in Canterbury any other priest that serves her thus." *Saint Thomas of Canterbury*

When he heard these words, Saint Thomas fell at the feet of that chaplain, and prayed him that he would intercede for him before the glorious Virgin, because he had sinned in that he had entreated her servant amiss. And he gave him his cure again, and would have advanced him to high office. But that young priest replied that he knew himself to be but ignorant and unworthy of any honour; and therefore he asked only that he might serve his Mistress, who, of her infinite compassion, did deign to receive his prayers.

And so did he do; but whereas aforetime he had indeed been slow of wit, now by God's grace he was quick to learn, so that soon he might do all things that became a priest, and rightly say the Daily Office. Yet because of the mercy that he had had of the glorious Virgin, he kept his old and loving custom; nor did he ever, so long as he lived, celebrate any other Mass than that of Our Lady Saint Mary.

THE DIVINE ENCOUNTER

OF A YOUNG GENTLEWOMAN, THAT WAS ACCUSTOMED TO INCITE THE LITTLE CHILDREN TO SAY "AVE, MARIA!" AND HOW GOD APPEARED TO HER IN THE FORM OF A LITTLE CHILD

The Divine Encounter

OUR sweet Lady, that is the most glorious Virgin Mary, has ever been the friend of maidens and the guardian of pure womanhood. Yea, and to them that serve her maidenly, having given their virtue into her keeping, she will always preserve it as an heavenly treasure.

Now one such servant had the Blessed Virgin in the old time; to wit, a certain young gentlewoman of noble breeding, that was most lovely and discreet. She was sought of many because of her loveliness and fair report; but for the great love and devotion which she had for the Virgin Mary, she was set upon another undertaking, namely, upon the keeping of her maidenhead. And all that love which she might have given to an husband and to children she offered to her celestial Bridegroom, and to the poor, that are the little children of Christ.

The Divine Encounter

For she said, "Since none ever called my dear Lady wife, why should I ask for it? And what children should I desire if not her little ones, that are every one the brothers and sisters of the Holy Child?"

Therefore this gentlewoman refused herself steadfastly to all lovers, tempted neither by riches nor by fairness of body nor by brave deeds. "For," she said, "I have chosen a fairer Master, that is the Captain of a more shining chivalry." And she lived solitary and in great simplicity, having always with her the pure love of Our Lady, the which puts all luxury to despite. Yet, having this great gift of a devout chastity, still she thought herself little worthy for the service of that Queen, holding herself to be but the lowest of Saint Mary's handmaids, and spotted with many faults: so great was the meekness of her heart. Those only, she thought, that had still the hearts of little children could bring to that service the white innocency it must have; and only from children's lips could the Virgin Mother hear again the melody of that pure and perfect love which her own Child had brought into the world.

Therefore this maiden, that loved the honour of Our Lady above everything—yea, even above the gaining of merit and the safety of her soul—was accustomed to call to her side those little children whom she met with in the way, and to caress them and promise them a little gift if they would say after her the *Ave, Maria!*

The Divine Encounter

For thus, she said, the circle of Our Lady's lovers would grow wider; and that Angelical Salutation, the which was always in her heart, would be offered for her by unsullied lips.

So it was, that one day as she went about her business she met a young and most fair boy upon the road. Never, she thought, had she seen a child more fit for God's service, for he walked as a king's son, yet meekly as becomes a little boy. When she spoke to him, he saluted her right courteously; and he looked on her without fear very sweetly, as one who knew she was his friend.

And she said, "My fair boy, because by God's will we have met upon the road, will you not say with me the words of the *Ave, Maria?* For it is the duty of all children to salute thus their dear Mother, that is the glorious Virgin Mary. If this you will do, I will give you this beautiful apple which I have here."

And the boy answered, "That will I do most willingly."

Then this gentlewoman began to say the *Ave, Maria!* and the child also said it after her, word after word, with great seriousness and attention, as if he knew not how to say it alone. And the girl praised Our Lady, for that she had allowed her to be the means of teaching this most dear and gentle boy the noble salutation, for she thought, "The defects of my offering may surely be made good by the innocency of his."

But when that they were come to the *Dominus Tecum*, the child ceased to repeat that which

The Divine Encounter

she taught him, and stayed silent. The gentlewoman thought he had not heard her rightly, and she recited the words several times, gently and slowly, that he might say them after her; but he would not.

Then she admonished him, and said, "Dear boy, it is not enough that we should salute Our Lady, saying, 'Hail, Mary! full of grace!' For this it is truly right to do; but it is also our duty that we confess, as the Angel Gabriel did, that God is with her, even the Lord Christ. Therefore say after me those words that I have taught you, that God may be also with you."

But still the child spake not; no, though she again charged him that he should do it. And several times over she said to him that he should do this devoir, lest God be offended by his lack of love. And at last, when he saw how strongly she pressed him, and that she would not let him go from her until he had recited the *Dominus Tecum*, the child said to her exceeding sweetly:

"What would you that I should say, and how is it possible that I should offer to My Mother this prayer? For I am that Lord Himself of Whom speaks the *Ave Maria:* 'Et ille benedictus fructus ventris sum.'"

And having said these words, He vanished, and she was alone in the way.

Then the girl knew that Our Lord Himself had visited her in His own Person, by His Most Blessed Mother's grace; and because she had ever desired that Mother's honour, He had

deigned of His great mercy to take from her lips the Angelic Salutation, making Himself even as those little children that she taught to be of His brotherhood. Thus doth He bless the lowly and the pure of heart, making Himself the mediator of their prayers. Then went she home, praising Him, and saying, 'Quia respexit humilitatem ancillae suae,' for she was exalted with a most holy joy. And by this adventure she was so greatly consoled, and so filled with a burning love towards Jesu Christ and His glorious Mother, that afterwards she lived even more devoutly than she had aforetime done. Nor did she cease to seek out the little children and make herself their friend, for she said:

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"It may be that I shall see Him again, for I know that He is with them."

Thus did she serve God and Saint Mary many years; and having passed her earthly days in the midst of good works, of innocency, and of love, she did at last most gloriously give back her soul to God.

THE CHURCH THAT IS IN EGYPT

HERE WE TELL HOW THE MOST HOLY VIRGIN APPEARED TO THE ARCHBISHOP THEOPHILUS, AND INSTRUCTED HIM CONCERNING THE JOURNEY THAT SHE TOOK INTO EGYPT WITH HER SON

The Church that is in Egypt

THEOPHILUS the Archbishop, a good and pious man, was Patriarch of Alexandria in the days wherein our holy fathers, Saint Augustine, Saint Ambrose, and Saint John Chrysostom ruled in the Church of God. And he, being thus set over the Egyptian Church, wondered oft concerning it, in what manner it had been stablished, and whence had come the grace that dwelt therein. For it is the tradition of the saints that this church is the first in all the world, being founded by our Saviour Jesu, when He fled, a little Child, into Egypt in His Mother's arms; and resting in the place that is called Heliopolis, where a great church now is, did bless it and consecrate it for ever to His service, and that of His Father, Almighty God. But others there be that utterly deny the matter, and say not that Christ Himself brought His Church into this land.

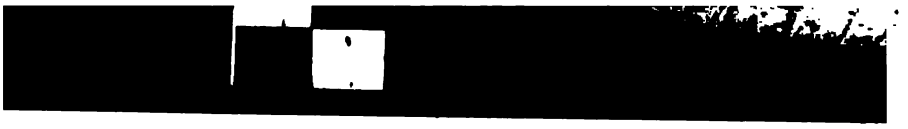
Now Theophilus the Archbishop, pondering

The Church that is in Egypt

these things, was greatly perplexed; and he most ardently desired to know the truth of it. And on one Sunday night, standing in the church of Heliopolis after that the Evening Office had been said, and the bishop and the elders had betaken them to sleep, he, being filled with exceeding longing for this knowledge, did go up to that high place where abideth the picture of our holy Lady, the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God; and standing before her, he stretched out his hands in holy supplication, saying:

"Hear me, oh my Lord and Saviour, Jesu Christ, Who didst hearken unto them that were gathered together in the council of Nicæa, so that they did stablish the Creed of God, and didst enlighten Athanasius Thy servant and bring him out of great tribulation to much honour and peace! Behold, I, Thy poor minister Theophilus, am sore perplexed; and therefore I beseech Thee that Thou wilt show me how Thou didst come and dwell in this house in the wilderness, and establish Thy Holy Church therein, that thereby I may gather strength the better to build up this house, that it may become a mighty church for the cherishing of Thy children and the honour of Thy Name."

And when he had so prayed, behold! a great light appeared to him, so that he thought the sun had risen, for midnight was long past and it was very dark within the church: and within this holy light he saw with great awe and thanksgiving the Queen of Women, even Our



Blessed Lady that gave birth to God. Exceeding splendour of great radiance was about her, and with her were Saint Michael and Saint Gabriel and great company of angels that worshipped and rejoiced. When this he saw, Theophilus was full of dread, and he fell down upon the ground as one that swoons; but Saint Michael raised him up right courteously, and the glorious Virgin spoke to him and said:

The Church that is in Egypt

"Fear not, Theophilus! for I am come in answer to thy prayer. Salutation unto thee, thou strong corner-stone of the Church of God. Behold, I am Mary, the daughter of Anna and Joachim, of the tribe of Juda, of the seed of David; and I am come to thee at the desire of my beloved Son, that I may show thee concerning the manner of His journey into this land."

Then did Theophilus the Archbishop give thanks with exceeding devotion; and when he had so done, Our Lady saith to him:

"Now will I reveal to you how that the Holy One did come to Egypt, and the wonders that He did therein, the grace of the which miracles doth still endure. And think not that He came with earthly majesty, rather was it a bitter pilgrimage and perilous: for we came on foot, because our estate was very lowly, for He that rideth on the clouds of Heaven desireth not the chariots of men.

"Now when Gabriel the Archangel warned us concerning those things that Herod would do;

The Church that is in Egypt

how that he would kill every male child, that amongst them he might take my little Son, we rose up, and came into this country as quickly as we might; and Joseph was with me, and also Salome. And I was full of fear, in that being a virgin, very ignorant and young, the only child of my mother, I had no knowledge of the manner in which little children should be cherished. But I carried my Child as well as I could, sometimes on my shoulders, sometimes on my back, and sometimes in my arms; and ofttimes I was very weary because of the length of the way, for I was a little woman, and weak. Then would Salome carry Him for me in turn; and sometimes I would set Him on the ground that He might follow me, as the women of my country do when they teach their little ones to walk. And my Baby would walk a little way, holding to the hem of my skirt; and then, as other children will, He would cry to me to carry Him again. And so soon as He desired it I would pick Him up right swiftly and embrace Him, and rejoice in His walking, as is the manner of women with their first-born sons.

"Now when that we had been many days upon our journey, and were full heart-sick because we could find no place wherein to tarry, for we were very footsore and the Child needed rest, we came near to a certain city; and without the gates of it we fell in with two thieves, an Hebrew and an Egyptian, that went in company. Then, when they saw us, the Hebrew saith to his companion:

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"'Do you see this Woman and her Son, whose apparel shines like royal raiment? Let us wait a little and watch them, that we may see whether it be possible to take it from them; for very surely it is of much price, and I desire it greatly. Here we are too near the city, but if we might meet them in the desert we could despoil them as we chose, for little could this old man do in their defence.'

"Saith the Egyptian: 'Let be, and do not molest this woman and her little one, for these are no common folk though they go on foot. Verily, I have not seen so wonderful a Child since the day that I was born, and I think that He must be a king's son.'

"Then those thieves went their way; and when they were gone, Joseph and Salome sat them down to rest beside the road. But I, because I needed water for the Child, took Him in my arms and entered into the city, for I thought that some woman would give it me for the Baby's sake. But though I asked it of many, none would give it me, for the people of that place were hard of heart. And behold! as I went with my Son through the market place, the idols that were set therein fell down with a great sound, and were broken; for the which cause the citizens were much afraid, for they thought that some sorcerer was come into the town. Then, because I could not have what I needed, I came out, and said to Joseph and Salome:

"'Rise up, let us depart from this city; for

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the people thereof have no mercy, and I cannot get water for the Child.' And being sorely wearied I wept, for I knew not what to do.

"And when that my Baby saw me weeping, He sought to wipe away my tears with His little fingers, and He said: 'Grieve not, dear Mother, for we shall have all things that we need.' And laying His hand upon the ground, that was much parched by the drought there was in all the land, at once a spring of water welled up from beneath it, that was sweet as honey and white as milk; and we drank of it and were refreshed thereby.

"Then, when our thirst was quenched, my little Child made the sign of Holy Cross above that spring of water, and He blessed it, saying, 'Let this water be for the healing and refreshment of all that shall drink therefrom: save only the people of this city, that have harshly entreated My Mother and caused her to weep.'

"And we rose up and went on our way; but now the day was near spent, and the road was wearisome and very hard to find. Now we journeyed toward this mountain whereon now I stand, for we hoped to find shelter therein; and Joseph was much vexed, for he thought it were better that we had rested near the city than that we should be alone in the desert when night fell, in that it was greatly solitary, and no defence should we have if any set on us to do us hurt. But I would not stay under the shadow of that place where they had refused water to my Son.

The Church that is in Egypt

"And behold! at the hour of sunset, as we went by the side of this mountain, a difficult way and perilous, those two thieves that we had aforetime met outside the city came and followed in our steps; and when we saw them we were full of fear, for we knew not what to do. And the Child was asleep in my arms, for He was very tired. Then, when they saw how that they were discovered, those two thieves rushed on us with drawn swords, saying:

"'Many days have we followed you and found you not, oh strange woman that goes on foot in royal raiment; and now, behold! you are delivered into our hands where none can give you help.'

"Then did they snatch my sweet Son from out my arms, and took off His raiment and left Him naked upon the earth; and my apparel they took also, even to the veil wherewith I covered my head. Now these were those garments of wine-coloured stuff that I had from out my mother's house in the days of my betrothal. And from Joseph, that stood there like an innocent sheep, knowing not what he should do, they took clothing also; and Salome, seeing these things, cast down her garments before them lest she be evilly used. Then, gathering all up, those thieves left us where we stood, and went apart and conversed together: and I was full of dread, seeing that they took counsel, for I said in my heart, 'They will take me, and make of me their bondwoman, and my little Child they will surely kill.'

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"And being greatly sorrowful I lifted Him up in my arms, all naked as they had left Him, and wept and laid my face to His face, so that my tears ran down upon His head. And I mourned, saying: 'Woe is me, woe is me, oh, my sweet Son! Whither shall I escape, and where can I bestow You safely, for that all men seek Your destruction wheresoever we go? I fled from Jerusalem lest Herod should take You; and lo! wicked men pursue You even into this wilderness. Ah, my little Child! how greatly unfortunate I am, that, being a young maiden, I have no wisdom to know what I should do. Whom do I know in this country who would cherish the Light of my eyes? Where can I go? Verily, all women that have borne children would weep for pity could they see me now! Ah! dearest Baby, how shall I endure it if they kill You? How shall I live without the sweet and heavenly words that You speak to me each day? I would that those mothers whose children Herod slew could weep with me this night!'

"And whilst I lamented thus, weeping in great anguish, so that my tears streamed down upon the body of the Child, that thief that was an Egyptian saw it; and being filled with compassion because of my grief, his heart was moved toward us by God's grace. Then he said to the Hebrew his partner:

"'My brother, it were well not to take the raiment of these travellers, for I am sure that if we do so ill will come of it. For I see on

their faces a light greater than that which shines on other folk, and this Child that we have stripped is like unto a king's son, so great a beauty hath He got.' *The Church that is in Egypt*

"But that thief that was a Jew replied to him very sourly, saying: 'Hold your peace, for I will in no wise give back the apparel we have taken from these wanderers; for it is exceeding rich and fair, and merchants will give us much gold for it. And nothing can they do to hurt us, in that here they are helpless in the wilderness; wherefore it would be folly to leave them undespoiled.'

"Saith the Egyptian: 'I will not consent to it, for my heart is moved with pity towards this little Child. Take therefore my portion of that spoil which we did take yesterday in the city, and give me in exchange the raiment of the Child and His Mother that I may give it back to them. Verily, I cannot endure to see this little one lying naked in His Mother's arms, as do the children of the poor.'

"Answered the Hebrew: 'Take, if you will.' Then did the merciful thief take and give it back to us, and I dressed my Son full joyfully and put on my cloak and veil again.

"Now when my dear Baby saw this courtesy that the Egyptian did to us, He made a sign like unto a seal over him with His little fingers very sweetly; then did those two thieves depart from us, and we gave thanks for our deliverance to Almighty God. And when this we had done, Jesu saith to me:

The Church that is in Egypt

"'Mother, forget not these two thieves, but keep their likeness ever in your heart; for I say unto you that in the day of My Passion they shall be crucified with Me, one on the right hand and one on the left, in Jerusalem by the Jews. And that thief the Egyptian, whom My Father in Heaven hath moved to show Me mercy this day, the same is he that shall believe on Me when I hang upon the tree of the Cross to suffer for the sins of men, and he shall enter into the Garden of Paradise, being the first-fruits of My Saints. But the Jew shall not believe. And as for this place wherein they have stripped Me naked, and you have washed My body with the sweet tears of your eyes, behold, a fountain shall here spring forth that shall be for the healing of every sick person that washeth therein. For the tears that you shed for love of Me shall refresh the world and give it life.'

"But whiles my little Child spake thus, the night was come upon us very dark, and Joseph admonished me, for he was greatly impatient, saying:

"'Come, tarry not, let us be gone, that we may reach the city as quickly as may be. For because you would not listen to me, that would have stayed in safety near the town, behold! we are here in the midst of the desert, where no shelter is nor help against wild beasts, and darkness is come. Verily, were it not for the goodness of God, already we had been killed by these thieves; and it

may well be that they will return and set upon us anew.'

The Church that is in Egypt

"Then my Baby looked into Joseph's face and said: 'Speak not thus to My Mother, oh, father, for it is My will that you entreat her with courtesy. Behold! it was not by your will, but rather by the will of My Father that is in Heaven, that I was made man; therefore He hath not put it into your power to rule over Me, for it is I that do rule the world. Nevertheless, I will go where you wish and do in all things as you desire.'

"And we set forth, and ascended into the mountain whereto we had journeyed; and there we found this house where now I am, that was a temple of false gods. And because we were very weary we entered into it full gladly, and I stood in the midst of it and set my Son upon the ground. Then He, having His holy feet set upon this earth that is before your eyes, lifted up His hands, and straitway the house was altogether filled with light divine; and I saw angels, that came and fed the Child, and the hosts of Heaven here worshipped at His feet. Then did I give thanks to God, Who had delivered us from evil men and brought us to this resting-place; and we abode here a long while, blessing and praising Him. And we had all things whereof we stood in need, for without the temple there was a cistern of stone, where the well of water now is, and my Child laying His hands upon it, it was filled even to the brim; and Salome, finding a basin and a

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pitcher in the temple, we washed Him therein, and laid Him to rest. And this shall be for a sign how that the Son of God here rested on His journey; wherefore this place is very holy, for it is the first in all the land of Egypt where my Child did rest and was at peace."

And thus said, the holy Virgin went out from the church of Heliopolis, and with her Saint Michael and Saint Gabriel and all the angels of her host; and the Patriarch Theophilus was alone.

HOC OPUS EXPLETUR
DEITATI GRATIA DETUR
ET MATRI DOMINI
QUAE NOSTRA SIT PIA FINI
AMEN.

Printed by BALLANTYNE & Co. LIMITED
Tavistock Street, London

FEB 7 - 1955